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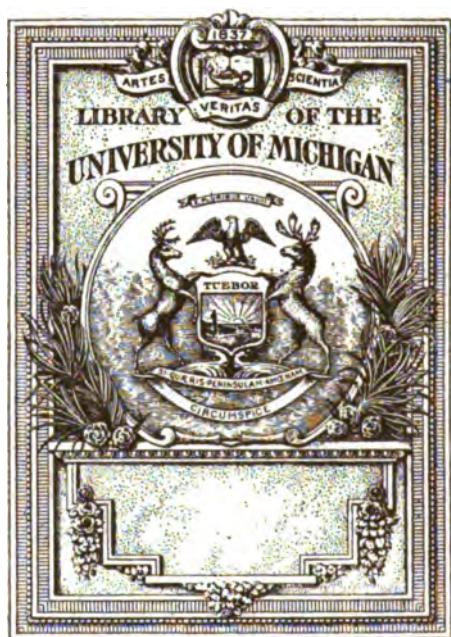
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THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
THEODORE TILTON

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Oxford

HORACE HART, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

THE COMPLETE
POETICAL WORKS

OF

THEODORE TILTON

IN ONE VOLUME

WITH

*A PREFACE ON BALLAD-MAKING
AND AN APPENDIX ON OLD NORSE MYTHS & FABLES*

'A Worm is in the bud of Youth
And at the root of Age'

Cowper

London

T. FISHER UNWIN
11 PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS

Oxford

B. H. BLACKWELL
50 AND 51 BROAD STREET

Paris

BRENTANO
37 AVENUE DE L'OPÉRA

1897



NOTE

THE present Edition includes not only the entire contents of all the previous editions, whether American, British, or Continental, but also many Lyrics, Ballads, Satires, and Sonnets heretofore unpublished: the whole constituting the Author's complete Poetical Works from 1858 to 1897—here given, for the first time, in a single Volume.

Dedication

—••—

THIS present, complete, and long-deferred Edition, I have now the sad privilege of inscribing, as a filial tribute, to the late

MRS. EUSEBIA TILTON

OF

KEYPORT, NEW JERSEY, U.S.A.

It was my cheerful hope, until a few months ago, that this revered woman—my venerable mother—would live to see and to welcome this book; but she recently died—in her eighty-seventh year—while these poems were passing through the press.

So an inscription which I had meant to be to her living self is transformed—by a touch of fate—into a dedication to her memory.

As she had been neither ill nor even ailing, her sudden death was a surprise which fell upon me with bewilderment.

The intelligence of my unsuspected misfortune reached me at the Riviera, on a bright March morning, upon a mountain-side whence I was watching the Mediterranean during some magical moments while (as Byron said)—

*‘A breeze
Broke the blue crystal of the seas.’*

Knowing of course how the sudden effect of ill-news upon the unprepared mind is apt to darken the sunshine, and to turn the world black, I marvelled why the shock of the message which I held in my hand—(and which has since made me miserable enough!)—did not then, for the nonce, blot out for me the brightest landscape in Europe.

On the contrary, I shall never forget the strange exaltation of spirit which I felt throughout the whole of that troubled day.

How shall I describe what is indescribable?

I can only say that I was seized and held, from morning till night, by one prolonged mood of intense curiosity to know whether external Nature could possibly (as some suppose) be endowed with a mystic gift of sympathy enabling the inanimate Earth to participate (however faintly) in the emotions of the Human Heart.

This beautiful faith—(as I well remembered at the moment)—had approved itself to the philosophic mind of Wordsworth, who regarded it as something more than a mere poetic fancy; and I recalled on the spot the intuitive and penetrating couplet in which he had told us—

*'That mortal hopes, defeated and o'erthrown,
Are mourned by man, and not by man alone!'*

My memory also reverted at once to certain parallel passages in Milton's 'Paradise Lost,' inculcating the same thrilling belief.

Accordingly, on that golden morning, I found myself imagining that my Grief (as a personified figure) shrank temporarily into the background, in order that meanwhile my Love and my Pride (each also as a personified figure) might by superior right first come forward and jointly assert themselves, which they did by imperatively demanding of the surrounding mountains, sky, and sea whether or not Universal Nature, in all its centuries of contact with the Human Race, had ever before seen another such woman as my mother on the face of the earth!

Now the remark which I have just made will appear less hyperbolic when I render my reason for making it.

For though my mother's death is too fresh an event for me to accompany it with any present analysis of her remarkable character; nor even for me to thrust into these dedicatory pages any impulsive panegyric which might seem—(as coming from her eldest son)—to be a pardonable eulogy upon her long life—devoted, with exemplary assiduity, to every moral and religious duty; yet, on the other hand, as my present and high privilege, I feel myself more than filially impelled to say of my mother that, while she was not remarkable for many things, she was unexampled for one.

I say 'unexampled'—or, if such a sweeping word be too comprehensive, tell me—whoso can!—whether the following fact be not a rarity even in the happiest of homes, and at the brightest of firesides?

What I have to communicate is the strict and literal truth:—

My mother was never once—in all her life—known to speak a cross

word!—no! neither to a man, nor to a woman, nor to a child, nor to a hired housemaid, nor to a dumb beast!

Never did one of her children, on any occasion, however provocative or exasperating, see her aroused to anger or to petulance—either toward her husband, or toward themselves, or toward the dog or the cat!

Her phenomenal serenity of temperament—a preternatural calm which nothing could disturb—came from an ancestral strain of Quaker blood;—such as, I fancy, must have been of the same sort of globules that vitally nourished the seraphic sweet-mindedness of John Woolman—whose writings Charles Lamb advised all troubled persons to ‘get by heart’;—though I must add that my mother was never officially a member of the Society of Friends, but was of the Baptist faith.

Throughout a period of more than half a century—in other words, during all her matronly years—such was her benignity of presence and of manner, that she was always the first person in her neighbourhood to be sent for by any afflicted household that happened to need a nurse for the sick—a comforter for the dying—or a watcher for the dead.

Her extreme love for flowers was of that peculiar and passionate type which invests them with the personal qualities of sentient and conscious beings; and throughout her life she kept up—in her flower-garden—the habit of always tending her plants with her own hands, preferring no help.

When I last visited her at her home in New Jersey (a few years ago), my father—who was then alive—a vigorous octogenarian—made to me a memorable remark concerning her, which I am proud to quote here:

‘My son,’ said he, ‘I would like to live a thousand years longer on this green earth, but I would ask to spend them all in a continued companionship with your mother!’

This unpremeditated ejaculation from the lips of a hale, cheery, and grandfatherly old man—who was already wellnigh a dozen years beyond the natural limit of his ‘threescore and ten’—seemed to me to afford a happy re-confirmation and re-vindication of that old-fashioned and genuine ideal of womanly, wifely, and motherly goodness which is mentioned in the Bible:—

‘Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her’ (Prov. xxxi. 28).

I do not exaggerate when I say that my old and Roman-faced but

child-hearted father—after his more than fourscore years of age—and after his nearly threescore years of wedlock with my mother—was just as much in love with her down to the latest conscious hour of his life as he had been in his honeymoon.

So, therefore, let no cynic or pessimist waste a breath or a moment or a sneer by trying to argue to me that a faithful and life-long wedded love is no more to be witnessed in our modern life, but has become one of the 'lost arts' of the ancients!

From my mother's sixtieth year—onward to the end of her tranquil days—her venerable and comely visage bore a noticeable resemblance to the portraits which Gilbert Stuart has left of George Washington.

Her birth was in 1810—her death in 1896.

If I could be sure that this book—(of which I had hoped to put the first copy into her hands, and of which this dedication is the chief honour that these poems can ever receive)—if I could dare feel that any of these pages have caught even a seventh part of the almost unique spirit of charity which was the animating principle of my mother's life, I would be more content with such a moral approbation than with any critical praise.

PARIS:

September 1, 1896.

PREFACE

TO THE PRESENT AND ONLY COMPLETE
EDITION OF THE ENTIRE SERIES OF
THE AUTHOR'S POETICAL WORKS FROM
1858 TO 1897.

THE object of this Edition is to give all the Author's poems in one volume.

As separate pieces, many of these ballads and lyrics appeared originally in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Independent*, *The Galaxy*, *The Dublin University Magazine*, *The Cornhill*, and other periodicals, on both sides of the ocean.

In 1867, about thirty of the earlier poems were gathered into a small collection (the Author's first book)—bearing the title of its opening ballad, 'THE SEXTON'S TALE.'

In 1880, a second and larger volume followed, called 'THOU AND I: a Lyric of Love-Life'—consisting of one long poem and forty shorter ones.

In 1882, a third volume, written mainly in South Germany, took the name of 'SWABIAN STORIES'—introducing (in various metres) some of the most characteristic local legends of Würtemberg—such as 'The White Ass,' 'The Fate of Frischlin,' and more than one tradition of 'Eberhart of the Beard.'

The three books thus far mentioned (dating respectively 1867, 1880, and 1882) had their first publication in New York; where also several separate lyrics, from time to time (especially at Christmas), were re-issued in the form of illus-

trated brochures; among which were 'The King's Ring,' 'The True Church,' the patriotic poem known as 'Toll, Roland, Toll!' and the children's song, 'The Fly.'

In 1885, in Paris, appeared 'GREAT TOM; or the Curfew-Bell of Oxford,' an historical ballad of the Beauclerc period, narrating the love-affair of King Henry the First with Edith Forne, and how it resulted in the founding of the most famous Abbey in England.

In 1893, this brochure was succeeded by a large volume entitled 'THE CHAMELEON'S DISH,' a lyrical tale (or series of tales), written with the design of showing the proneness of the mind of man to be cheated by hopes and illusions. This volume was handsomely printed at the Oxford University Press, and was simultaneously published in Oxford, London, and Paris.

In 1894, a companion-volume, 'HEART'S EASE' (a medley of miscellaneous pieces, some old and some new), was printed at the same press, and published for the same market.

Two pieces of elegiac verse—one on President Carnot, and the other on Oliver Wendell Holmes—were published in France, England, and America in the year 1894.

In the spring of 1895, a pamphlet of sonnets, nineteen in number, entitled 'A CAREER UNIQUE,' written in commemoration of the life and genius of Frederick Douglass, appeared in Paris, from the press of Brentano.

A second edition of this pamphlet, and a third and enlarged edition of 'THE CHAMELEON'S DISH,' were issued—one in the summer, and the other in the autumn, of 1895.

The whole contents of all the above-named books, brochures, and 'occasional' publications, whether written in America or in Europe, are given in this present Edition: to which also are added not a few pieces hitherto unpublished, and now for the first time in print.

This copious Edition, which thus brings all the Author's poems into one collection, and in a single volume, is arranged on the systematic plan of presenting all the various pieces in the order in which they were written; not of course attempting to assign to every poem the exact (and often impossible) date of its composition; for obviously such a date is not always definite, and cannot be fixed or named.

For instance, when did Gray write *The Elegy in a Country Churchyard*? or when did Rossetti write *The Blessed Damsel*? Neither of those poets could have accurately stated the year in which either of those poems was begun or finished. A poem may be begun in one year, and finished in another—it may even be begun in the writer's youth, and finished in his old age.

A strictly accurate chronological sequence, therefore, in the arrangement of such a large collection of small and disconnected pieces as this volume contains, cannot always be pursued.

Nevertheless the poems in this book follow each other, as nearly as possible, in the order in which they were composed: an order very different (in many instances) from that in which they were first published.

The volume, as thus chronologically arranged, extends from 1858 to 1897, covering a field of nearly forty years.

*
* *

It may be cynically said that an author's 'complete poetical works' should not be collected till after his death—when (fortunately for his fame) they might not be collected at all!

But, on the other hand, a free writer of 'fugitive pieces,' who has flung them off on frequent occasions during a long career, is forced at last, in self-defence, to collect them all into an 'authorized edition': for if he has had the luck to produce, among several hundreds of unnoticed pieces, a few that have been widely circulated (which, for example, have passed into school-books, and are recited on public platforms), he is often chagrined to find these darlings of his heart reprinted in a form so changed, so mutilated, and even so dismembered, that he dreads to meet his scarred bantlings, and wishes that they had never been born!

Thus 'The Fly' and 'Toll, Roland, Toll!' have suffered continuous misprinting during three decades of the newspaper-press; while even 'The King's Ring'—the earliest poem in the present volume (and never widely enough reproduced to be specially maltreated)—has nevertheless lately turned up in the West Indies, whence it came back to me from Jamaica to Paris with its title altered, and with other 'modern improvements' to the fateful number of thirteen!

Such accidents (which are always happening to all stanzas or extracted passages that may chance, through the courtesy of the public journals, to obtain an uncommonly wide currency) will demand, sooner or later, the intervention of a 'standard edition' by which such inevitable errors may be corrected, and the true text restored.

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* *

If a great proportion of the poems in this book be found to take a narrative cast, it is because of the Author's strong conviction that a poem (generally speaking) ought to be a tale.

Of course, the claim would be absurd that such a rule should be rigorous.

Nevertheless, the most cherished of all our English poetry, throughout the whole five or six centuries of our literature, has usually had a story to tell.

As a natural consequence, the world's best stories (which have never at any epoch since Boccaccio been great in number) have, for the most part, been long since told.

It is the glorious fortune of the Present Age that its new inventions are chiefly scientific or practical, rather than romantic or literary.

But even in our most utilitarian of times and of countries, at the very heart's-core of our Western and modernmost world, the old Human Nature still remains, to be the fountain-head of feeling and of fancy; and the old Anglo-Saxon or Gothic intellect, however modernized in America, can never cease to crave in its literature something akin to what foreign nations find for themselves in their ancestral and ancient folk-lore.

Reverence for the Past is more a passion among Americans than among Europeans.

This feeling grows with our democratic growth, and strengthens with our self-governing strength.

The Bostonian of to-day goes beyond Daniel Webster in local pride whenever a foreign visitor asks to be taken to Bunker Hill.

The 'up-to-date' New Yorker who is now waiting for a rainbow of iron to span the Hudson River, finds meanwhile an uncommercial and historic charm in looking back

upon our few remaining moss-grown memorials of the Knickerbockers: nor (to judge by my own native share in the Manhattan 'local pride') have I found that any genuine New Yorker has even yet ceased to feel a pang at the perishing of the Stuyvesant Pear-Tree: and moreover, many of us already begin to wish that our noble city's commonplace (and now meaningless) name—a name which will be more and more a misnomer as the Metropolis grows older and older—might be happily exchanged for some apt and original Indian word smacking of the soil of Manhattan Island.

'How to Beautify New York' is just now the subject of an aesthetic discussion in that city: and I beg to suggest that the first thing to do is to change the city's awkward and absurd name.

* *

All the great modern nations—even our own, which is the youngest—are already old: and this fact, as time glides on, will give a more and more retrospective tendency to all modern literature, but especially to literature in the United States.

At the present hour, throughout the American Republic, the popular taste for histories, memoirs, and reminiscences—in other words, for annals of things gone by—is noticeably greater than it ever was before: and this reflex and retrospective interest must increase: it cannot diminish: for the Past, like a lengthening shadow, must continue to grow more and more picturesque and impressive: and the influence of history and tradition must more and more dominate the imagination of the American People.

* *

Of course in every country, the Past, with its national souvenirs, and with its legendary lore, is a common literary heritage of all writers: but it is the Balladist in particular who, more than his fellow-scribes, has need to possess the historic spirit: for the balladist, in the practice of his art (an art the most primitive of all arts), will always find that whatever be his theme or occasion, whatever be his aim or purpose, he will hope in vain to hit upon a better way of working out his poetic design than by means of the most

primaeval of all literary schemes : which is, a plain narrative, a true (or probable) chronicle, a chain of actual (or at least orderly) events and incidents : so that whether his chosen topic be a fact or a fable, he will in either case owe to his reader what Shakespeare calls 'a tale or history.'

Of course a ballad without a legend, without a chronicle, without a narrative of some sort, either feigned or true, would be no ballad at all.

So when Canning's 'Needy Knifegrinder' cries out—

'Story, God bless you, I have none to tell, Sir!'—

the clever bard at once supplies the deficiency by turning the ludicrous situation into a merry recital, which is not less dramatic than Cowper's *Diverting History of John Gilpin*.

The genuine balladist—or bard of the people—is he who thus (as Sir Philip Sidney says)—

'Cometh upon you with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney-corner.'

* * *

It would be a waste of words to ask how far other kinds of poetry besides the Ballad need for their nucleus a tale to tell : the question admits of no just answer : for whoso should attempt to limit or prescribe the forms which poetic thought may fitly take in rhythmic verse would have as vain a labour as

'To bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades.'

Accordingly, inasmuch as the bards are free—or, in other words, inasmuch as their song-craft is

'Wild above rule or art'—

they are apt to offer us (say once about every ten years) some new school of poetry, just as their fellow-artists give us (even oftener still) some new school of painting or sculpture : for the Harp, like the Brush and the Chisel, has its fitful freaks—now of Romanticism, now of Realism, and now of Impressionism.

But in each and every art alike, the New School seldom lives to be old : while, on the other hand, the Old School, even if it falls out of favour for a time, is sure to edge its

way back into fresh vogue by means of its antique trick of being ever new.

* *

The late Laureate, Lord Tennyson, was the one man in all England who, in his time, did the most to restore to the English tongue something of its lost Elizabethan charm : and though he sang—

‘Ring out the Old! ring in the New!’—

yet even with this very song (by its monosyllabic simplicity of style) he was already reversing a grandiloquent and tawdry taste, and was in fact ringing out the new, and ringing in the old!

But what if Tennyson, who was the spiritual son and re-incarnation of Keats, had shamed the pure Greek genius of both alike by writing the Legends of the Round Table in the super-sublime Latin polysyllables of Dr. Samuel Johnson?

Or what if blind old John Milton, in dictating his verses to his daughters, had made the mistake of choosing the monotonous ding-dong of Dryden’s repetitious and unvarying rhymed-couplets in describing, for instance, the following love-scene between Adam and Eve?—

‘So cheered he his fair spouse, and she was cheered;
But silently a gentle tear let fall
From either eye, and wiped him with her hair;
Two other precious drops that ready stood,
Each in their crystal sluice, he, ere they fell,
Kissed.’

(*Paradise Lost*.)

Such good old English, pure, sweet, and simple, may well tempt the modern critic to cry out—

‘No man having tasted the old wine, straightway desireth the new, for he saith, the old is better!’

* *

But dropping the mere question of Style, and reverting to the main question of Form, let this Preface say at once—even at the risk of seeming trite and antiquated—that every page of the following big book has been written in the spirit of an honest fealty—yea, even of an affectionate allegiance—to our elder English poetry.

And why?

It is because I ardently hold that our elder English poetry,

though too shamefully neglected, is not only far from being obsolete, but on the contrary is full of fresh and perennial wit, wisdom, and good cheer ; and is full also both of clear Style and of fine Form : so that, in spite of all the rudeness and crudeness of a young language, we find that the choicest of our elder English poetry, judging it 'by and large'—say from the *Canterbury Tales* down to *Hudibras*—may claim as its double characteristic, first a pithy vigour of word and phrase, and next, a wholesome sense of the inestimable value of narrative.

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* *

In this Preface, therefore, the present rhymers insist, not only as a balladist, but also as a sonneteer—and even as a songster—that every kind of English verse (except perhaps the most didactic) ought to have for its substructure or backbone a clear and logical narrative : and I even hold, furthermore, that a vertebral, central, and sustaining frame-work of narrative is all the more necessary for the reader's help and comfort in proportion as the subject of the writer's 'chanson' is mystical, supernatural, or incredible.

So though narrative-verse is, of course, only one of the many 'Protean forms and shapes' which poetry may winsomely assume ; yet what is here reiterated is, that poetry when formless and shapeless—poetry with a bodiless body—poetry without a tale to tell—will of necessity, by the filminess of its unsubstantial structure, lack the pith of that primal and universal model of the popular poetry of all nations—which is, narrative.

*
* *

Quite counter to this theory, however, is the practice of many of the bright and rising wits of our day, especially in England, where much of the newest poetry, just now current, affects to be independent of all helps from any 'tale or history.'

But what is the consequence ?

The consequence is, that for want of a convenient fable or chronicle to serve as the supporting prop of the verse, a poem thus written is a vine without a trellis, and therefore tumbles into a tumult of luxuriance, wherein colour is everything and form nothing.

So, though such 'fine writing' is just now the fashion in certain British circles, yet in spite of its ornate elegance, and

often of its moral merit, it lacks the first beauty of a brilliant style, which is, a shining perspicuity.

Not even a pikestaff should be as plain as a poem !

* *

In our Mother Country, at the present time, the Literary Class—I mean the whole class of practised *littérateurs*, including novelists, journalists, biographers, essayists, book-reviewers, political pasquinadists, paraphrasts of popular science, the eloquent tribe of fashion-reporters, together with the ‘madding crowd’ of magazine-poets : all this cohort of productive brains, especially in London, is growing every year into a bigger and bolder

‘Mob of gentlemen who write with ease ;’

in addition to whom there is also a lesser mob of ladies who write with even greater ease.

Now many of these brainy people, mark ! I do not say all, yet more than a few (and they are of both sexes), seem to me at present engaged as by one accord in a common and tremendous effort, in their own unresisting city, and in an unrebuked proximity to Buckingham Palace, on purpose to do violence to the Queen’s English, and to give the old and standard language of the land a new and terrible wrench !

In fact, they are pulling and tearing their mother-tongue to pieces!—de-Saxonizing it!—longo-verbalizing it!—and even re-inventing its time-honoured syntax !

This is Literary Anarchism ; and, in the Republic of Letters, it constitutes the imminent danger of the hour.

* *

Now in all kinds of literary composition it is better to be clear without being clever, than to be clever without being clear ; but in the dim and smoky world of London there is just now a mystic and introspective band of young *littérateurs* who are devoted exclusively to evolutions from their inner consciousness, and who are giving us a too generous glut of magnificent writing of a sort that would be brilliantly eloquent save only that it is illustriously obscure.

It is a singular fact in literary history that, in England, the few recognized and acknowledged High Poets of the present age—Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, and the rest—have very seldom (and in fact, almost never) written for the magazines.

Hence it happens that the British magazines have come to possess a constantly recruited and innumerable staff, or rather legion, of minor poets ; who, feeling the force of their comradeship, and the freshness of their youth, are at the present hour engaged in a gay endeavour to rejuvenate and to modernize the English language.

And some of their elders are joining them in their frolic—as when Dr. Johnson said to Boswell and to some other young sports one day, ‘ Yes, lads, I will have a frisk with you ! ’

*
* *

Now the question here arises :—

Are we not then to be ‘ modern ’ ? Is not our literature to keep abreast with the times ? And do not our magazines, like our daily journals, exist for the very purpose of reflecting the ever-advancing spirit of the age, not only in Science and in Art, but also in Literature ?

Yes, certainly !

But in Merrie England (as I am sorry to take notice) a process is now going on (fostered mainly by the British magazines) whereby the English language is being modernized to a degree out of proportion to the modern growth and progress of England in every other respect : for not the English Church, not the English jurisprudence, not the English civic system, not the English University curriculum, not the English Derby, not the English coinage, not even the English chine of beef, no, nothing in England of late years has so greatly changed as the English language itself !

And it has changed for the worse !

Some of to-day’s jargon would make an Elizabethan cringe !

For instance, imagine Ben Jonson at the Mermaid Tavern, saying to Shakespeare, ‘ Read me your *The Tempest*, and I will read you my *The Fox*. ’

Such syntax is not English, but spurious and abominable !

Just now, there are literary critics in England with whom no new novel is sufficiently modern which is not so introspective or (as the Germans say) so ‘ subjective ’ that the old-fashioned reader, in trying to follow the new-fangled style, is lost in a labyrinth harder to thread than Fair Rosamond’s bower at Woodstock !

*
* *

Moreover, in the menacing and deplorable progress of this new literary tendency, Young America is keeping pace with Young England; for in the United States, although a dozen of our superior magazines are growing yearly more and more idiomatic in their prose; yet, on the contrary, in the little odd corners and half-pages which these very same (and very clever) periodicals devote to poetry, there is apt to be an opalesque outbreak, once a month, of a dim yet incandescent and ominous rhetoric which serves mainly to make 'darkness visible.'

* *

Accordingly, in spite of the joint influence of Longfellow and Tennyson, each of whom, while living, was a popular idol in the two countries, it strangely happens that already a rising race of their young successors, in both hemispheres, are ceasing to use the Saxon English of these twin masters, and are now moaning to us at each new moon, in that Latinized verbiage which is supposed to be the most resonant echo of unfelt woe!

Let us answer in just enough of Latin to cry out, *Obsta principiis!*

There is need at once, in Great and in Greater Britain, and in our own 'Universal Yankee Nation,' which (in a derivative sense) is the Greatest Britain of all—there is need at once of an international rally among the whole English-speaking race in protest against the wrong which is now beginning to be wreaked upon our common Mother-tongue!

* *

How can this 'subjective' and 'sesquipedalian' folly, which is doubly unwelcome in English verse, be shamed out of its pompous intrusiveness, and be driven to hide its diminished head?

I offer a suggestion.

Ten or twenty healthy-minded young minstrels, both men and women, both English and American, lovers of Shakespeare and the Bible, and having a literary career yet to make, would do a good service to English letters by banding together in a counter-movement in favour of a plain and pure English style as against the present murky and magazinish school of over-worded, ever-whining, too utterly beautiful, and altogether super-exquisite and atra-bilious verse.

* *

It is easy to say that genius is scarce ; that talent, though it may be abundant, yet is pre-ordained by Nature to be a quality of moderate force and fire ; and that therefore, in all languages ancient or modern, the great bulk of every national literature, even if too good to be bad, must of necessity be too bad to be good.

Now, although such a statement is true, nevertheless it does not account for certain wayward and extravagant tendencies in our current lyrical literature, especially its over-Olympian high-flightiness, up! up! and up! into the perilous altitude of an atmosphere not of thin air but of thick cloud.

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* *

As a definite illustration of my meaning, the reader will find in this volume (at page 659) a parody on this magniloquent verbosity. This parody is a satire which I have ventured to entitle, 'Parnassus Modernissimus, or the Old Poets Improved.' Nor is the caricature (in my opinion) too extravagant to represent with a reasonable degree of verisimilitude certain of the newest and most fantastic phases of a school of poetry now coming into modish currency ; a school which, in sentiment, is prone to indulge itself in lackadaisical forlornness and sepulchral gloom ; and which, in style, is ornamented with far-fetched epithets, parenthetical interpolations, unnecessary details that ought to be left to the reader's imagination, metaphysical reasonings which are wasted in deducing such self-evident truths as need neither proof nor inquiry, together also with a five-syllabled Latinity of un-English English, such as would have struck our plain-speaking forefathers dumb !

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* *

Without seeking to make a pedagogic inquiry into the changes which the nineteenth century has brought into the English language, I will nevertheless take the present occasion to quote a suggestive letter, written in England September 3, 1858, to Professor E. B. Cowell of Calcutta by his then venerable (and now deceased) friend Edward Fitzgerald, the well-known British scholar and critic, the translator of Camoens and of Omar Khayyam. This letter was a mere private and hasty screech, full of family chit-chat and

homely trifles ; but the wise old man who wrote it chanced to make in it a remark which I regard as no trifle ; but which, on the contrary, deserves the attention of everybody who cares for the purity and honour of our English tongue.

Mr. Fitzgerald wrote to Professor Cowell as follows :—

'I always say that I have heard the language of Queen Elisabeth's or King Harry's court in the Suffolk villages.'

And he adds that the English language, as he was in the habit of hearing it spoken by his humble friends and neighbours in those Suffolk villages, seemed to him

'better a great deal than that spoken in London societies, whether fashionable or literary.'

Mr. Fitzgerald's letter, of which I have cited only a fragment, is another way of saying (and of saying with an authority which cannot be impugned), that in England, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the proud old English language—the language of Queen Bess, of King Hal, and of Shakespeare—has been driven away from 'the literary and fashionable societies of London,' and has taken refuge among the plain and good folk who still keep up the early and typical English simplicity of life and speech on their Suffolk farms and village-greens.

* *

Be it observed that this erudite British critic, whose judgement his friend Thackeray esteemed highly, is not here alleging (after the manner of many glib Englishmen) that what they call the 'King's English'—or, more often, the 'Queen's English'—has suffered from the baleful influence of the 'Great Republic,' or, in other words, has been damaged by becoming 'Americanized.'

Mr. Fitzgerald lays the blame not on Boston, nor on New York, but on 'the literary and fashionable societies of London.'

I am not sufficiently intimate with those British circles either to corroborate or to deny Mr. Fitzgerald's indictment ; and yet one of the results of my experience as an American visiting foreign lands has been so singular that I may be pardoned for here putting on record a scrap of my own personal testimony, as a sort of corollary to Mr. Fitzgerald's striking statement.

What I can testify to is this :—

The best English which I have heard spoken in Europe, whether in London or Paris, whether in Stuttgart or Munich, has been the simple talk of American children too young to have caught as yet the national twang and slang of their elders, and too frank and spontaneous in their simple and natural utterance to have as yet become addicted to the artificial, *ore rotundo*, *à la mode* persiflage which is now a 'fad' among the 'five-o'clocks' of 'fine society.'

If those 'literary and fashionable' stylists in London who long ago forfeited the critical respect of Mr. Fitzgerald want now to get back agen into 'the good old path,' I know of no better steps for them to take than simply to follow the great text which says—

'A little child shall lead them.'

* *

It goes without saying that the English language, after having long borne much ill-usage in all quarters of the globe, lacks to-day (in street and market-place, in pulpit and senate-house) something of the firmness and vigour which distinguished it in the days of Queen Elizabeth and of her 'Poet Paramount.'

We now miss what Keats called 'the large utterance of the early gods!'

How can this be otherwise?

'A new language,' said Charles Lamb, 'came in with the Restoration.'

The shrewd author of *Elia* was right in this remark; for certainly the Restoration of the Stuarts brought with it, not only a new king, a new court, a new order of politics, of religion, of dress, and of manners, but likewise 'a new language.'

Moreover, the new style of English which thus came in with King Charles the Second—and which he made 'the court lingo'—was no improvement on the previous and more sterling English which had signally translated the Bible in the reign of his royal grandfather King James the First.

* *

Starting, therefore, from James the First and his 'Bible,' and coming down thence to Charles the Second and his 'new language'; and thence still further down to these

Victorian and *fin-de-siècle* days of ours ; let us ask, What sort of English have we now ?

* *

Nearly 130 millions of the present living population of the globe have inherited the English language as their birthright.

Of course, it is absurd to suppose that these toiling and moiling masses, who, for the most part, have had but few school-days, and whose literary acquirements do not include a severe syntax or an inexorable prosody—it cannot be expected, I say, that such a motley multitude will speak and write their mother-tongue with a fine mastery and a perfect taste.

This would be hoping too much of human nature.

But, on the other hand, the Western half of the English-speaking world, the half who are accused of ‘Americanizing’ the English language, have surely a fair right to expect that their noble Mother-tongue will not be put to shame in the ‘literary and fashionable societies of London’: and I freely confess that we Yankees, Knickerbockers, Hoosiers, Grangers, Badgers, F.F.V’s., Michiganders, and Cow-Boys—all think it very discouraging, when we go forth in search of ‘English undefiled,’ to be dolefully forewarned that we are to find it chiefly in old British villages, and among young American children !

* *

It is easy to say that some contaminating touches and spots of soilure have come upon the purity of the English tongue by the vulgarizing influence of the newspaper-press. And yet, on the other hand, some of the best possible specimens of pure and genuine English—the current English of to-day—are to be found in the daily journals. For instance, hardly a day passes but *The Times* (in London) and *The Sun* (in New York) have each some editorial or other article which Joseph Addison or Oliver Goldsmith might have been proud to sign.

Good English, therefore, is not a ‘lost art’: only there is ‘a plentiful lack’ of it, especially in the lesser and looser sort of the daily prints in both countries.

This is strikingly seen during those occasional thundergusty and half-hurricane spasms of international ill-temper when Mother and Daughter vie with each other in journalistic jingo and rhodomontade.

It is then that the American Eagle and the British Lion, though generally disunited, yet for the nonce unite in one common (and also uncommon) lingo, composed in equal parts of scream and roar!—of bluster and vainglory!

It is at these junctures that our British cousins, in reminding us of our other peccadilloes, are sometimes so miffed and growlish as to cap the climax of our offences by taunting us with 'Americanizing' the English language.

* * *

Now, although it is customary on the Columbian side of the Atlantic to meet this British indictment by what the lawyers call 'Confession and avoidance,' yet I may point with pride to at least one especial and salutary feature of this 'Americanization' of the English tongue.

It is this.

Brother Jonathan, with a good honest brag, may justly say to John Bull that our American school-children, during the last forty years, have been brought up to a more accurate knowledge of English grammar than has been acquired during the same period by their juvenile British cousins; owing, of course, solely and only, to a long and unaccountable tardiness in the establishment of a general and widespread system of free-schools for the children of the British people.

But popular instruction (Heaven be praised for it!) has been making great progress of late in our Mother Country.

English grammar can already count a host of new friends even in England; where it now begins, for the first time (centuries too late!), to be studied in Universities and Colleges.

There has been a great awakening in England as to the necessity of including the English tongue as a study of equal importance with any other study in the British curriculum of youthful preparation for after-life.

But this long, long-neglected reform has only very recently been set on a firm footing in England.

Hitherto every well-born British lad has been carefully taught his Greek by learned professors; but, at the same time, every such lad has been expected to pick up his English for himself, without the help of a teacher, or of a class, or of a manual.

The common notion has prevailed for many generations

that a British boy would imbibe his mother-tongue—if not with his mother's milk—yet, later on, with the damp ozone of his misty and mighty island.

This notion is, of course, true—but true only to a meagre and misleading degree.

On the other hand, the fact has been definitely ascertained that Dogberry made a bad blunder when he said—

‘To read and write comes by nature.’

No such Dogberrian mistake has been made in the United States; where, ever since the introduction of the common-school system—say from the year 1835 onward—studies in English have been held to be more needful for American boys and girls than studies in antique lore.

Perhaps if this sort of ‘Americanization of the English language’ had extended from America to England a generation or two earlier, it might have saved the ‘literary and fashionable societies of London’ from Mr. Fitzgerald’s scathing sarcasm!

In fact, the ‘literary and fashionable’ language in London, just now, presents the unhappy spectacle of being sadly divided against its own lofty self; for one of our recent American Ministers to the Court of St. James narrates that he asked separately of three different British noblemen of ducal rank—each a patron of all the elegant arts!—the innocent question, What is the correct pronunciation of that salubrious plant from which Dean Swift proposed to extract summer-sunshine for winter-warmth? And the inquirer received three diverse ‘literary and fashionable’ answers—namely, Cucumber, Coocumber, and Cowcumber!

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* *

But, setting all pleasantry aside, and speaking with the gravity proper to a pedantic Preface, I say point-blank, and sparing not, that in spite of our American common-schools, and of their wholesome influence on our millions of young American minds, there has been nevertheless, for the last two or three decades, a sorry tendency throughout ‘The Universal Yankee Nation’ to corrupt and degrade the English tongue.

What have we been doing to it?

We have been bombastianizing it, gasifying it, and inflating it to a sevenfold degree ; that is to say, amplifying it not by a natural enlargement, such as is commensurate with the ever-widening activities of our people ; but we have been outrageously blowing into it an extraneous and spasmodic breath altogether alien to its innate life and ghost ; stuffing out its phraseology with an over-swollen and unsubstantial strength, much in the same way as we pump air into the pneumatic tire of a bicycle (or, if that word be already obsolete, I may say 'bike').

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But fashions are like tides, and have their time for turning : and the present bad fashion of intolerably Latinizing, lengthening, and sesquipedalianizing our good old short-and-sweet English words and phrases, is beginning to hold out a high hope of a speedy change.

The custom of sweeping majestically and with awful grandeur through a great circle of big words just merely to get around Robin Hood's barn, will by-and-by be thought a work of supererogation, and a butt of ridicule.

I do not prophesy that the twentieth century will be without its quota of slang ; for a merry word of the best slang (and some of our slang is not bad but good) is, after all, but one of the forms of sportive relief with which our busy people wisely poke fun at each other in the serious rush and tumult of our exciting American life.

Meanwhile we do not lack in America, both in and out of our colleges, the fine intellectual material for the making of just such experts in literary finish as are to be found by the score at Cambridge and Oxford—perhaps more especially at Oxford where (for instance) the noble old Dr. Jowett spent his life in translating Plato into the beautiful language of the Suffolk villages ; a translation which Matthew Arnold once said to me (as he often said to others), 'was itself a classic' !

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* *

It is useless to carp at the over-jealous and ever-testy *amour propre* that characterizes the editorial references which American and British journals occasionally make to each other, amounting in the course of a year to an enormous bulk of mutual and able abuse ; but which, at the same time,

is (by its own very necessity) partisan and passionate, and is therefore pardonably lacking in a marble polish of international politeness.

Newspapers of course will be newspapers, just as boys will be boys.

Nevertheless, on the other hand, we Americans, and especially we Americans living abroad, are justified in feeling a little squeamish on perusing, during an occasional 'crisis,' the loose and dangerous rhetoric which stalks like a threatening spectre into the official correspondence between the American State Department at Washington and the British Foreign Office in London.

Will any serious harm come of it?

I hope not.

But I cannot help saying, How seldom do the political magnates of either country, in their gravest public utterances, evince nowadays the noble strength which (for instance) dignified the papers of *The Federalist*, or the speeches of Edmund Burke!

In fact, since the time of Thomas Jefferson, there has probably been in the United States but *one*, and in Great Britain *not* one, party-leader whose official pen could infuse into a public document of paramount importance the mingled intellectual authority and moral grandeur which the whole world has found in the Declaration of American Independence: a document which, when now read at the opening of any Fourth of July celebration in Forty-Five States, is sure to be a better specimen of English than any of the speeches which follow it!

The one exceptional publicist to whom I allude as the only peer of Thomas Jefferson in penning our American State-papers was, of course, Abraham Lincoln.

I once spent three hours in the ante-chamber of the Lincoln Mausoleum at Springfield in Illinois, on the walls of which his Proclamation of Emancipation, together with his other celebrated official utterances, had then lately been hung up in frames, so that they might be easily inspected and solemnly pondered on the spot.

I went round from frame to frame, from quotation to quotation, reading here an extract from a letter, there from a message, and there from a speech; and after I had thus eagerly refreshed my recollection of all those strong, clear,

true, wise, simple and wholesome maxims, characteristic of one of the most remarkable personalities of our country and our period, I came away saying to myself: 'I would not care a fig to wear any king's crown, or to sit in any president's chair, but oh, would that the Good Fairies had given me as my birth-gift this noble writer's pen!'

Though President Lincoln's Cabinet was one of the ablest that ever sat in the White House, yet I do not believe that any single member of it except his own gifted self could have written the famous speech at Gettysburgh—that brief speech wherein this quaint and simple yet mighty master of words made three small prepositions do the whole work of explaining his proposed policy for the reconstruction of the shattered Republic, to wit:—

'That this Nation, under God, shall have a new birth of Freedom, and that government *of* the people, *by* the people, and *for* the people, shall not perish from the earth!' Speech of Nov. 19, 1863.

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Even Addison, who was inimitable in *The Spectator*, failed as a writer of governmental dispatches and edicts.

Suppose now that we draw a comparison between the Queen of England and the President of the United States, in their respective functions as being each the keeper of a nation's conscience, and each the holder of a nation's quill.

Take the last dozen successive documents known as the 'Queen's Speech,' and compare them with the corresponding last dozen known as the 'President's Message.'

Not one of these joint twenty-four state-papers (so far as I can recall them)—either John Bull's or Brother Jonathan's—no, not one, was a shining specimen of pure and sound English.

The vivacious and critical Cobbett used to complain that the Speech from the Throne was always badly written; and he took a fierce grammarian's savage delight in picking it to pieces, and in holding it up to ridicule. Were Cobbett now alive, it would be interesting to know his opinion as to whether the average 'President's Message' is any improvement on the average 'Queen's Speech,' or whether both alike are, year by year, descending into an 'innocuous desuetude!'

Notwithstanding the long and wholesome influence of John Bright in simplifying the parliamentary language of his day and country; and notwithstanding a similar oratorical

influence exerted in no small degree in the pulpit by Spurgeon (for both those public teachers possessed, as Bunyan did before them, the secret of a pithy, homely, and searching style); yet, on the other hand, it must be admitted that Mr. Fitzgerald had no small justification for his criticism upon the more complex English of 'the literary and fashionable societies of London.' These societies are charming. Their English is of course not bad. On the contrary, it is good. But is it the best? No, certainly not! The old grace is not there! the old flavour is gone!

* *

The fault which Mr. Fitzgerald charged upon the 'literary and fashionable societies of London' was due, I think, in a great measure, to the cotemporary and widespread influence of Robert Southey.

Few literary men ever attained, in their lifetime, the immense authority and vogue which, during the thirty years of Southey's laureateship, attached to his name and pen.

During all this period, covering a whole generation, his personal influence was for good in every direction save one alone: but here it was baneful: for he lowered the standard of 'literary and fashionable' English to a level which I make bold to characterize as little above the commonplace.

The style of Southey seems to me to be

'Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null.'

It was Southey who invested John Bull with a certain ineffable, unnatural and yet impressive dignity known as 'heavy respectability'; an especially Southeyan sort of dignity, which prompted Tennyson (in a moment of inspired waggery) to describe John Bull's hallowed and Southeyan idea of God to be 'An Almighty Clergyman with an Infinite Cravat.'

Of course, every American (like every Englishman) ought to respect both the character and the labours of Southey: and yet how did this good and able man use his eminent and sovereign position? What return did he make to his countrymen as the one great result of their honouring him with a literary chieftainship and genial despotism unexampled in England since Dr. Johnson's day?

What Southey did with his laureateship, and with all its accompanying and tremendous prerogatives, was simply and

only to starch and to stiffen the language of the 'literary and fashionable societies of London': and he did this work so well that, according to Mr. Fitzgerald, the starching and the stiffening remain to this day!

Robert Southey was one of the most lady-like of men, a soft-spoken and beatitudinous pietist of a sort—

'Who would not with a peremptory tone
Assert the nose upon his face his own.'

Let any man who has a soul above a white mouse, sit down and read Southey's *Life of Nelson* (which passes for 'a model book'), and then let him rise from the reading, and walk out into the open air, and, after refreshing himself perhaps with a sudden and happy glimpse of the salt sea, ask himself the following question:—

Who wrote the better English—the swift and fiery sailor, or his solemn and perfunctory biographer?

I do not hesitate to declare that the best English in Southey's 'model book' consists of the quotations which the 'literary and fashionable' author makes from the pithy, glowing, ringing, and world-shaking dispatches and mandates of his intrepid hero: a hero whose simple and untitled name seems to me to be always struggling to get out of the sublimely genteel, frosty and formal English of this 'literary and fashionable' biography and to hide modestly behind that more Roman anagram, which (strangely enough) runs thus:—

*Horatio Nelson,
Honor est a Nilo.*

Southey for thirty years was held up by the 'literary and fashionable societies of London' to a serene and correct eminence over a group of rival writers who far outweighed him, not only as masters of thought, but as masters of style. Not to speak of Byron (who hated him unduly, and without reason), Southey fell far below Scott in vigour, far below De Quincey in clearness, far below Sidney Smith in humour, far below Cowper in pathos, far below Wordsworth in insight, and far below Coleridge in everything!

And yet Southey, to this day, continues to speak, not merely as 'one of the scribes,' but as 'one having authority': and his authority is still sufficient to stilt and to regulate and to formalize the prevailing English style of the 'literary and fashionable societies of London.'

* * *

There is often a very small difference between an English sentence or phrase which seems quite absolutely perfect, and the same sentence or phrase suddenly heightened by a single glowing word which gives it a strangely added pith and power.

I will cite an instance.

When Washington died, the encomiastic resolutions which were immediately put on record by the American Congress called him very fitly—

‘First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his *fellow-citizens*.’

This was official rhetoric, and was as good as the best of its kind.

Nevertheless, on the next day, in the same assembly, when Henry Lee of Virginia, who was a natural orator, attempted, in making an impassioned speech, to quote from memory the official declaration of the day before, he chanced by divine good luck to utter it as follows—

‘First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his *countrymen*.’

And the whole American people have ever since rejected the official for the amended form of the noble phrase!

Such an incident affords a fine commentary on Selden’s celebrated remark that—

‘Syllables govern the world.’

* * *

How small is the difference oftentimes between what is poetic and what is prosaic!

Here too I will give an instance.

Thomson, in *The Seasons*, speaks of—

‘An elegant sufficiency, content,
Refinement, rural quiet, friends, books,
Ease and alternate labour, useful life,
Progressive virtue, and approving Heaven.’

I call all this a passage of mere prose, but when the same author says, in the same poem—

‘The meek-eyed Morn appears, mother of dews!’—

I call it a line of pure poetry.

* * *

Between English that is idiomatic, and English that is awkward, there is often but a hair's-breadth. Thus, when Walter Scott was a young paterfamilias he wrote to Mrs. Seward saying—

‘Come and see my *little two children*’:

whereupon the English lady merrily replied—

‘No, I will go and see your *two little children*.’

* *

In 1590, Richard Grafton, a born Englishman writing in London, penned the following verses as the first and original form of an immortal poem—

‘Thirty dayes hath Nouember,
Aprill, June, and September’:

but there seemed to the English public something wrong in putting November before September; and so the ballad-singers have sent down the lines to future ages thus—

‘Thirty days hath September,
April, June, and November.’

* *

There are millions of living, intelligent, and patriotic men who to-day are proud to asseverate, each for himself, what Daniel Webster, in 1850, expressed in the famous words—

‘I was born an American; I live an American; I shall die an American.’

Among the millions to whom this American phrase is a household word, there is a vast multitude, whom I know not how to number, who love the English language as they revere the English common law, or as they cherish the English principles of constitutional liberty.

Moreover, we have had among our American scholars certain authoritative critics of the English language who have had no superiors on the British side of the water.

For instance, on the occasion of the death of James Russell Lowell, the spontaneous and noble tributes to him which that event elicited from the whole English press, proved that the whole cohort of British scholars recognized in this American the equal of the ablest of the English University ‘dons’ in all points pertaining to a critical knowledge of the English tongue.

* *

Perhaps no American living abroad can help indulging in a too irrepressible and an altogether preposterous pride in his country. Is it pride only? It is more—it is vain-glory! In fact, it is both.

‘I stood in a congregation of Kings,’ said Orville Dewey, ‘for I was an American citizen!’

This splendid bit of braggadocio is another way of our boasting that the American people are an antique line of sovereigns renewed in the New World, a race of modern Agamemnons, or ‘Kings of men.’

So I must point out one particular in which this Yankee kingship seems ‘too, too’ regally and imperially magnificent!

For, as to our ever-growing American greatness, the one especial feature of it which, in living for some years away from home, I have witnessed from a distance with the most wonder—and with the least pride—has been what?

It has not been our Napa grapes; nor our *ne plus ultra* chrysanthemums; nor our high protective tariffs; nor our unlimited coinage of silver; nor our toploftical and twenty-storied tenement-houses; nor our Saturnian-ringed Ferris-wheels; nor our Sunday newspapers of God’s Acre size;—but it is the enormous increase in the voluminous and obese proportions of every new American dictionary of the English tongue!

In fact, these huge lexicographic monuments of a language which is now sometimes cuttinglly called ‘Americanese,’ already occupy so much of the limited space usually available, in a humble dwelling, for a modest library, that if these tremendous tomes continue to thicken during the next century at their present rate of grandiosity, the time will come when a literary man who lives in a small house will be gradually edged out of doors by the over-swollen bulkiness of his dictionaries!

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The two English-speaking nations have of late years been trying to outdo each other in over-wording our common language.

Now, in all this, there is much evil! It is a positive mischief! It is a case for a more than Venezuelan committee of inquiry!

If old Drayton and his friend Drummond, or if Beaumont and his co-quill, Fletcher, could now step out of their graves

and go to a coffee-house in the Strand, and there pick up—to their wonderment—a London morning newspaper, or the latest Cockney magazine, they would find so many new and alien words in it as to make them stagger, and to cry out, 'We must be in a foreign country!'

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* *

What the English language needs at its present stage of phenomenal literary activity is a powerful impulse—a sudden and sharp shock—in the direction of its early simplicity and primal strength.

In the days of the 'Bloody Marian' persecution, a witty petition was circulated in England for the release of four famous prisoners—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—who had been unjustly deprived of their liberty.

There should now be in that country a new Habeas Corpus, which should forbid the sequestration and locking up of any good, honest, home-spun, old-fashioned English word that has once had the free run of the whole realm, but which happens now to be kept in banishment or 'durance vile' by the 'literary and fashionable societies of London.'

On the other hand, to match such a British 'Habeas Corpus,' there should be an American 'Monroe Doctrine,' which should construe the language of the 'literary and fashionable societies of London' as a *casus belli* on its attempted introduction into Boston or New York!

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* *

Of course, I do not mean that we ought to return to what is now the archaic and old-fashioned phraseology of Queen Elizabeth's playwrights.

Not at all!

This we *could* not do if we would, and *would* not if we could.

Nevertheless, just as we revere classic Greek, and just as we revere classic Latin, I hold that just so (and even to a greater degree) we ought to revere classic English!

Moreover, the classic English of our supreme reverence ought to be the English of Shakespeare and of King James's Bible.

No other and later standard of English, and certainly not the 'new language' of Charles the Second, nor the present

dialect of the 'literary and fashionable societies of London,' should displace from the minds of the most modern of Englishmen and Americans an inextinguishable and faithful homage, not only to Shakespeare, but also to that super-eminent version of the Scriptures, which remains to this present year of grace the best embodiment of the classic usage, meaning, and idiomatic energy of English words!

It is a happy omen that this Biblical standard of classic English has received in our day, however unwittingly or accidentally, the re-allegiance of the whole English-speaking world.

This auspicious fact is worthy of no common attention.

The New Version of the Bible, which was made a few years ago in the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster Abbey, was the work of the best possible workmen who could have been appointed to such a task. They were the chief scholars of the kingdom! But in spite of all their modern learning, which renders their re-translation a precious monument of linguistic erudition, nevertheless their completed work has fallen as dead (especially in the United States) as if the eminent divines who dabbled with it had spent their wisdom and wit in re-writing and modernizing Shakespeare's plays!

It is no disparagement to the New Version to say that no American wants it except as a curiosity, or as a commentary, but not at all as a substitute.

The New Version has in no sense unkinged or dethroned the Old!

There has been (at least in America) no lowering of the supremacy of the Bible of King James in favour of the Bible of Queen Victoria.

The old book still reigns in Yankeeland exactly as it did in 1620, at the Landing of the Pilgrims, who brought it with them in the *Mayflower*.

Great were the expectations which the Victorian revision—before it was yet issued from the press in England—had already awakened in the United States. The idea of re-gilding the Gospels in a style more golden than the pure gold of King James's Bible was for a while 'a literary sensation.' In fact, certain American newspapers made 'a tremendous hit' by publishing in their columns—in a single morning issue—the whole unabridged New Testament as 'a literary item.'

The revised scripture had 'a run'; but the run was brief; for the book was received with eagerness, with respect, and with disappointment.

Now, I need hardly add that only a fool or a boor would disparage or belittle the stupendous labour and the vast learning which produced the New Version.

Nevertheless, the New Version, in spite of its many features of noble value, has served chiefly to confirm the superior nobility and dignity of the Old.

The warm (yet soon cooled) reception which the New Version got in the United States, if it be rightly interpreted, is seen to have a profound meaning: for it means that though the English tongue has been 'despitefully used and persecuted' by the 'literary and fashionable societies of London,' and though, to its further harm, our noble language has been Australianized, Canadianized, and Americanized; yet, after all, neither Americans, nor Canadians, nor Australians, nor perhaps even the 'literary and fashionable societies of London,' want to see the old standard of seventeenth century English pulled down from its ideal superiority, and a new standard of nineteenth century misusages and corruptions set up in its place!

In short, the American rejection of the New Version is our national tribute to the good Old English of our forefathers, and is our way of insisting that this Old English has now become with Americans a classic, and that—with *us*, at least—a classic it must and shall remain!

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Now I ask—

In what way does the current English of our day differ most strikingly from the English of Shakespeare and of our old and household Bible of 1611?

I reply—

It is not merely a literary or a verbal, but a deeper and a moral difference.

When we look at the present great army of living writers in both countries—writers whose intellectual resources are beyond doubt, and whose literary activity is beyond praise—we see that even in their best work there is lacking a grand old quality which distinguished the rougher yet richer writing of our forefathers.

The modern absence of this elder virtue is due, I suppose, to the over-intense materialism of our time.

What an un-modern gift is the fine old art of choosing words not only for their logical fitness, but for their moral weight !

The rare and precious addition of a moral quality (or perhaps I might better say, of a spiritual force) to literary style is the distinguishing mark of a high, rich, and fine nature, a temperament akin to the religious ; and accordingly this endowment has been seen (in modern days) in its fullest perfection in a few gifted *women* ; as, for example, in the writings of Charlotte Brontë, of Mrs. Browning, of Mrs. Stowe, of 'George Eliot,' of Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and of Mrs. Judson (or 'Fanny Forester') ; and I must add that this same moral majesty of utterance used to be heard in the speeches which, thirty years ago, came from the inspired lips of the venerable Lucretia Mott, whose Quaker extemporizations I have known to fall upon a spell-bound audience, and to hallow the occasion as the oratory of no *man* save an Apostle ever had the spiritual power to do.

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But though this impartation of a moral or higher aesthetic or spiritual quality to style is a gift that comes to its finest flower in *women*—yet it is also seen in golden glory in the pages of a few exceptional *men*. Sir Thomas Brown had it of old ; and so had Izaak Walton, though in a less degree. In the United States we have had, in our own day and generation, three marked instances of it : that is to say, we see it in Ralph Waldo Emerson as an essayist ; we see it in Nathaniel Hawthorne as a novelist ; and we see it in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow as a poet.

No tribute, I think, is too great to be paid to these three noble writers, not merely for their contributions to philosophy, to romance, and to poetry, but also for their unique (or at least for their unusual) services to the English language by thus investing their words with a moral and spiritual power.

When Emerson coined a maxim, it became inevitably one of the proverbs of the world. When Hawthorne told a tale, it passed by common acclaim to the rank of a classic. And as for Longfellow, you may open any of his books at whatever page you will, and the style emits a quality which I can characterize by no other word than 'fragrance'—as if, for

instance, 'sweet-fennel' had been sprinkled between the leaves!

What a trio of elect and anointed men!—men belonging (all three of them) to our Western and barbarous limb of the world!—men who have 'Americanized' the English tongue!—that is to say, who have washed it and cleansed it from the 'sacred and genteel' touch of Robert Southey and of the 'literary and fashionable societies of London!'

And not a few other cunning pens have done their share in this renovating process of 'Americanizing' that international language which certain brashy Britishers sometimes rather angrily assume to be exclusively their own!—though Lowell (by the way), not long before he died, wrote as follows:

'It might be questioned whether we could not establish a stronger title to the ownership of the English tongue, than the mother-islanders themselves.'

And he adds that—

'Shakespeare stands less in need of a glossary to most New Englanders than to many a native of the Old Country.'

It is, of course, the nature of most Americans to be always 'Americanizing' *something*; and among those who have not scrupled to conspire for the 'Americanization' of the English language have been Washington Irving, Charles Sumner, William Cullen Bryant, John Greenleaf Whittier, Richard Henry Stoddard, Moses Coit Tyler, Sidney Howard Gay, Bret Harte, Bayard Taylor and his friend Edmund Clarence Stedman, not to forget our late eccentric Long Islander, Walt Whitman, nor our most weird genius of all, Edgar Allan Poe!

This list which I have thus given is purposely brief: I could justly make it three times longer: but I do not wish to play the rôle of Rhadamanthus, nor to assume the prerogative of portioning out literary honours to my countrymen.

But I cannot refrain from reminding our British critics that *Poor Richard*, the almanac-maker—also that Noah Webster, the lexicographer—and furthermore that Lindley Murray, the grammarian—were all three of them genuine Americans of that 'homespun' kind which is called 'dyed in the wool.'

Now, just as I have often heard it said that the best French in France is not spoken in Paris, but at Tours; that the best German in Germany is not spoken in Berlin, but at Hanover; so I have occasionally heard it said (as a

Hibernicism!) that the best English in England is not spoken in London, but in Dublin.

I have not visited the Suffolk villages in which (according to Mr. Fitzgerald) the court-language of Queen Bess and King Hal is still spoken at the present day. The usual language of daily life, as I have heard it in many other parts of England, both in city and in country, has struck me as being less direct, less compact, less brief, and less point-blank than in my own more nervous and excitable land. Our British brethren, however, have a certain leisurely and deep-chested utterance which I admire. They talk like placid folk who hate to be hurried; whereas, in America, every man who has a word to say gets rid of it quickly, as if he were about to catch a train! Nothing exists without a cause.

What is the cause of a certain stiltedness and polite and grave circumlocution in the conversation of a typical Britisher, as compared with that of the cut-and-slash, time-saving, and high-pressure typical Yankee who comes and goes in a twinkling, yet who contrives while he tarries for a few minutes (for instance, at an English garden-party) to utter, with the most unintended and unconscious insolence, some remark which counterstates and pooh-poohs the most inveterate (and therefore the most vulnerable) prejudices of Mr. John Bull's manly mind and of Mrs. John Bull's matronly heart?

The cause is twofold: it is both natural and moral.

The natural cause is climate; but this fact is so obvious and so well known that I may here dismiss it at once.

The moral cause of the 'Americanization of the English language' is not so apparent, and is worth a word or two of inquiry.

The prolonged ferment of the American mind from 1850 to 1865—and even to 1870—covering, first, the anti-slavery crisis; next, the civil war; and finally, the re-construction of the Union—had a heated influence on the English language, as spoken and written in the United States, in comparison with Robert Southey's colder type of the same tongue as then and still regnant in the 'literary and fashionable societies of London.'

We were astir: *they* were at rest.

It is impossible for the younger class even of *American* writers of the present day—born since the attack on the

national flag at Fort Sumter in 1860—yes, it is quite impossible for young men in the United States to-day to realize the intensity, either of the moral, or of the mere intellectual, passion of that fervid time! Every man's brain was then on fire! Every pen and tongue had something vital to put into burning words! There was one great and awful theme; and this was a chastener of style; for in proportion as men grow terribly in earnest, their words and phrases grow hot, clear, pure, and plain!

How like an ancient prophet spake William Lloyd Garrison, saying—

‘My country is the world—my countrymen are all mankind!’

Quaint old Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun—a naïve and piquant Englishman—had taught us (150 years before) that every great crisis was to be solved only by resolutely probing it with three test-questions: first, What is it? next, Why is it? and last, What then?

So every American whose heart was with the North, and with the Union, and with the cause of Freedom against Slavery, was occupied for a few years in pressing on every doubter whom he met some such prickly argument as the following:—

What is it? It is War!

Why is it? It is Slavery!

What then? It is Emancipation!

Such and so simple was the fiery journalism, oratory, and conversation of those angry days!

Much of all the outcry then made was made in bad English—just as *Magna Charta* was made in bad Latin.

But during our American Civil War we happened to have among our countrymen a few gifted men, born, cradled, trained, and anointed in the North, who rose to such a mastery of the English tongue as has not since been equalled (certainly not excelled) on either side of the sea.

Just for illustration, I will speak of *two* of these men, and two only: Horace Greeley, journalist, and Wendell Phillips, orator.

The pen of the one, and the tongue of the other, ‘touched nothing which it did not adorn.’

During a dozen or twenty tumultuous years no American, whether man, woman, or child, could ever read an editorial

by Horace Greeley, or could ever hear a speech by Wendell Phillips, without thereby—willy, nilly—getting a fine lesson in good English!

As to the *political* debt which our country owes to these two patriots, great as I hold it to be, this Preface (which is a mere *literary* screed) has nothing to do; but I wish to say here, with as much emphasis as my small measure of literary authority can give to my words, that Horace Greeley and Wendell Phillips (wholly irrespective of their political views and opinions—which anybody may either like or dislike) were such masters of good English that I have not since found, in either country, an equal journalist or an equal orator.

It was the mission of these two men to utter the cry of the bondman; and they uttered this cry under an inspiration which gave to their utterance an uncommon moral dignity: for it was an inspiration that came from 'remembering them that were in bonds as bound with them.'

Now as I have frankly said that I have not seen the like of these two teachers of English in either land, so I ask—

Shall we see their like agen, by-and-by, in the United States? Yes!

And why?

For this good reason, namely:—

In the next century, in all probability, there will be a re-awakening and re-inspiration of the whole national American mind!

History repeats itself.

We Americans shall, in a dozen or twenty years, have more millions of slaves than six—of more colours than black—and of more irksome chains than iron or brass!

Our country will then see a hundred millions of citizens engaged in such wars of public opinion, such conflicts of reason and argument, such rivalries of social systems and philosophies, such antagonistic theories of political economy, such statement and counter-statement of public policy (including Touchstone's 'counter-check quarrelsome'), such pro and con on a baker's dozen or more of burning questions—which will glow with a half-sacred and a half-infernal fire—in short, we shall so reek with new schemes and theories that an extra activity and importance will then invest our American platform of free discussion; for without doubt the near-coming

free discussion of all these agitating questions will necessarily bring with it an electric re-quickening of the English language as spoken and written and printed and scattered upon the wings of the wind throughout the whole United States.

* *

I am of those who believe that though the near future of Europe—say for the next half-century—is to be shaped by armies and cannon; yet, at the same time, our happier (and yet not altogether happy!) American Republic will be then passing through its next stage of progress by means mainly of peace.

How grand a part, therefore, the English language (wherein 'the pen is mightier than the sword') is likely to play in our American affairs of the twentieth century!

What is the 'manifest destiny' of our Republic?

Living as I do in a foreign land, I think I can foresee (more plainly than I did at home) that the mission of our country is to be—a wider diffusion of knowledge; a greater love of equity; a higher ennoblement of all forms of lowly labour; a social progress based, not on Utopian dreams, but on a solid foundation of practical science; a 'self-government' less crude, extravagant, and superficial than the mass of our Americans now ignorantly idolize; a superior freedom to that by which we are now stupidly begging the law of the land to do for us what we ought, instead, to do for ourselves; and, above all, a greater reverence, not for sacerdotal authority, but for 'Nature and for Nature's God.'

The world has suffered in time past, and is to suffer in time to come, from a slavish allegiance to a number of false opinions which still maintain (even in our own free country) their tyrannous empire over the human mind: in the first place, false *political* opinions which have feudalized human society, setting the spurred boot-heel of an upper class upon the too willing neck of a lower; secondly, false *social* opinions, retarding the political emancipation and the intellectual development of woman; thirdly, false *financial* opinions, which are now demoralizing every thrifty nation on the earth, not by a petty controversy between silver and gold, but by a universal over-estimate of the value of either and both—in other words, money-greed—a world-wide repetition of the *auri sacra fames* of the ancients—'the accursed

thirst of gain'; fourthly, false and hollow *beau monde* opinions, which are giving a bad eminence to our American fashionable society, by rendering our parvenus and our shoddy '400' the laughing-stock of the elder aristocracies of the earth; and (last, but not least) false *religious* opinions, which for ages have substituted terror and torture in place of the Divine Benignity, and which have thereby systematically imputed to the gracious and merciful Fatherhood of God the Satanic attributes of an Evil Being.

All these, and many other, false opinions—some of them impious, some of them dangerous, some of them merely silly and contemptible—are to be challenged in the next century; and it is the English language which is to challenge them!—to refute them!—and to argue them down!

It is a language which therefore will need its best resources for its great task!

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Moreover the English language, in striding over the world as it is now doing (like the giant of the seven-leagued boots in the fairy-tale!) is sooner or later to fulfil among other than English-speaking nations and colonies the office of a language of diplomacy.

I do not say that English is to displace French; not at all; but there seems every probability that English will, sooner or later, take something like an equal rank with French in the interchange of *pourparlers*—in the transcription of treaties—and in the audiences of ambassadors.

France—La Belle France (and may her Republic outwit all the combined machinations both of Imperialists and of Royalists!)—is a country that has strangely and ominously ceased to grow in population. The census shows a 'stand-still.' But while the population of France is at a 'stand-still,' the population of Germany, on the one hand, and of England on the other, is of a vigorous and rapid growth. All these signs and tokens are prophetic. Gibbon the historian, deducing the philosophy of history, said—

'All that is human must retrograde if it do not advance.'

Jacques Bertillon has shown (see *Le Temps*, Feb. 26, 1897) that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the births in France (to every thousand of the population) were thirty-three—a ratio which has now dwindled to twenty-two!

When a new house is now built in Paris, it is without a play-room for children ; no group of children being expected.

The French social statistics all point to one inevitable conclusion. France must, sooner or later, forfeit her supereminence in all that concerns international diplomacy, and must find herself no longer able to retain for the French tongue the honour of being the exclusive language for diplomatic interchange throughout the world.

A number of combined influences, of which the chief are politics, commerce, missionary effort, colonization, travel, maritime discovery, and naval supremacy, together also with the innate Gothic genius of the English-speaking race, will immensely increase the use of the English language in all parts of the globe in years to come.

What sort of English will it be ?

In England, it will probably be of a type still further off than ever from its classic and ideal purity: for though Robert Southey is dead, yet the 'literary and fashionable societies of London' will probably still remain very much alive, with no thought either of dying or of reforming, but will undoubtedly go on vexing and tormenting the grieved ghost of Edward Fitzgerald in his Suffolk and honoured grave !

In America, meanwhile, we Yankees,—who have kept the New Bible from infringing upon the Old, and who have our millions of public-school children everywhere to supply to us those happy models of pure English which in England are limited to a few Suffolk villages,—we Yankees perhaps may as yachtsmen lose our *America Cup*, yet as grammarians we shall continue to make a wise progress in the 'Americanization' of the English tongue, and we may even do something to unstarch, to unstiffen, to un-Latinize, and to re-Saxonize the 'literary and fashionable societies of London.'

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I beg now to offer a word or two on a different subject—I mean Rhyme.

Though the proverb says—

'Nil de gustibus non disputandum,'

yet there is more variance of opinion as to literary *taste* than there is on any other vexed question of literature.

Moreover, since it takes all sorts of people to keep the

world a-going, so of course there must be singular folk who (strange to say) dislike strawberries, who hate roses, and who detest rhymes.

Even so bright a man as Thomas Carlyle had not the wit to see any reason for the use of rhyme; but then, it must be remembered, to his justification, that he abominated rhyme because he could not stomach poetry of *any* sort; and one day, during a smoking-bout with his friend Tennyson, he told the laureate that *all* poets would do better to write *all* their poems *always* in prose instead of verse!

But I may claim that it was a much greater Scotchman than Carlyle who taught me to love rhyme: and I may therefore be here indulged in narrating an incident to which, for now more than half a century, I look back with a strange stir of pleasure.

In my tenth year (or thereabouts) I chanced, one summer morning, in my grandfather's cottage in New Jersey, to come upon the following lines in an old book:—

‘Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes!
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise!
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream—
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream!’

These musical lines, though I knew nothing of their authorship, and though I had never heard of Robert Burns, struck me as being of a surpassing sweetness. I at once got them by heart, and then went out of the house and recited them to the fowls in the barnyard, and to the cattle in the field. I kept on repeating them till the sun went down!

I have felt the charm of rhyme ever since that day!

Hence it happens that most of the poems in the present volume are *rhymed*:—not only in defiance of Carlyle, but in defiance likewise of one of the supreme poets of the whole world, the inimitable author of *Paradise Lost*.

Carlyle's protest against rhyme was from natural grumpiness, but Milton's was better grounded.

In 1668, when Milton publicly printed a condemnation of what he called ‘the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming,’ he had a good reason for his objections. A sort of rhyming had then become fashionable in England which was a vice indeed—and even more than a vice; for it had reached the dignity of a public calamity. I refer to the rhyme of the rhymed plays which King Charles the Second

brought into vogue with his 'new language': a wretched, flimsy fustian of rhyme, yet which (under court patronage) continued to be a 'fad' during the Restoration, and which even outlived the Stuarts and Queen Anne. I blush and burn to think that such rumbling rigmaroles of undramatic jingle should have dislodged Shakespeare from the British stage for two generations!

Meanwhile, no man in England knew so well as Milton how much superior Shakespeare was to Dryden and to Dryden's imitators.

So 'the old man eloquent' was roused to indignation, and he pointed with a just pride to his own great epic as re-introducing into English literature the long-banished blank verse of Shakespeare.

Milton's rhymeless masterpiece, therefore, was very fitly claimed by its author to be a lost precedent restored—or, to use his own exact words, 'an antique liberty recovered.'

But Milton's protest against rhyming was, of course, not against such rhymes as he himself had written: it was no protest against his own *Lycidas*, nor against his own *L'Allegro*, nor against his own *Il Penseroso*, nor against any of his own incomparable sonnets: it was, on the contrary, a just and needed protest against a monotonous and tiresome, yet royally patronized, school of rhyming tragedies which then pleased a rich and courtly mob of the basest sort of flatterers, but which the blind old Puritan's finer ear rejected and purer taste despised.

It is no reflection on the great ability of Dryden and Pope, and no disparagement of the eminent rank which they each hold (and which they each for ever *ought* to hold!) in our English literature, to say that these two men, living and writing in the free country of Shakespeare and Milton, nevertheless kept English poetry bound and enslaved to one unvarying model of verse for a hundred years: a model which Milton, who was surfeited with it, loathed; and at which Shakespeare, had he lived to see it, would have laughed!

It may be truthfully said that from the period when Dryden was a precocious young bookworm of twenty, down to the period when Pope was a prematurely old 'Cato the Censor' at fifty—in other words, from the middle of the seventeenth to the middle of the eighteenth century—nearly all the poetry

written in England, not only by these two men, but also by their innumerable emulators and mediocre imitators, was rigidly and faithfully fashioned after the following unchanged and unchangeable pattern—

‘For forms of government let fools contest;
Whate’er is best administered is best.’

The English language, in the unnumbered multitude of its printed books, and in the dusty spaciousness of its uncounted solemn libraries, contains I know not how many millions of unimmortal distichs, all exactly modelled after the above prosaic, wooden, and tiresome example !

How can we wonder, therefore, that this universal stiltedness, which for three, for four, and even for five generations characterized (let me rather say *paralyzed*!) English poetry, at last provoked the college-wits of ‘Merrie England’ to rebel against the traditional sanctity of this time-honoured, Mede-and-Persian, never-to-be-altered style of verse, and to make themselves jolly by satirizing it, lampooning it, and hacking it with more than Caesar’s twenty-three wounds? And one of these satires—a mock-heroic imitation of the majestic but too long-offending ‘rhymed couplets’—was so delightfully killing, that I give myself the vicious pleasure of quoting it here :—

‘Thus when a barber and a collier fight,
The barber beats the luckless collier—white!
The dusty collier heaves his pondrous sack,
And, big with vengeance, beats the barber—black!
In comes the brick-dust man, with grime o’erspread,
And beats the collier and the barber—red!
—Black, red, and white, in various clouds are tost,—
Till, in the dust they raise, the combatants are lost!’

The Trip to Cambridge (Christopher Smart).

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Is it not plain that the beauty, the felicity, and the charm of rhyme are not in its monotony but in its variety?

Rhyme is natural to the English-speaking race!

We are Goths.

The Northmen, whose descendants we are, were born with a genius for rhyme. Their earliest and primitive poetic instinct was for a form of rhyme not made of terminal words but of initial letters; that is to say, for alliteration; but their *letter-rhyme* grew inevitably into *word-rhyme*.

Even the Latin-mouthing monks of the Middle Ages were

caught with the fascination of rhyme ; as witness Thomas de Celano and his resounding hymn—

‘ Dies irae, dies illa.
Solvat saeculum in favilla,
Teste David cum Sibylla.’

Moreover, there are, in fact, not a few rhymes even in *Paradise Lost*.

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What if Poe had written *Annabel Lee* without imparting to it the quicksilver illuiveness of rhyme ? Or what if Tennyson had checked the flow of *The Brook* by embedding this ‘silver streak’ in a stiff encumberment of blank verse ? Carlyle might have seen no charm in either of those felicitous pieces of faultless rhyme ; but Milton, I believe, would have admired the equally limpid versification of both.

We nowadays hear much of what is called ‘the music of the future.’ In my own opinion, the best music of the future, both in England and in America, will not come from the musician’s baton, but from the poet’s pen. And it will be rhyme ! For, be it known that the rhyming resources of our language have never yet been put to a test !

Dryden and Pope, by keeping *one*—and *only one*—stereotyped form of verse standing in every English printing-office for a hundred years, to be the single and unvarying model for all sorts of poetic expression, have injuriously hindered the natural and normal development of English rhyme.

But Dryden and Pope have had their day, and done their hurdy-gurdying ; and we shall undoubtedly see in the twentieth century many new forms of English metre—the more, the merrier !

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In order to emphasize my sense of the great value of rhyme—I mean of rhyme rid of monotony, and set free to riot and revel in diversity—I will quote at haphazard from the whole field of our general English literature a dozen (or perhaps more) very brief and very gem-like specimens of familiar rhymes ; in order to ask the reader to decide for himself whether any—even a single one—of the following string of poetic pearls would, in *his* opinion, be more pearl-like and perfect by not owing their shape and form to having been moulded and rounded in rhyme.

For instance, as a first specimen, let me ask if Shakespeare, when he was writing *Macbeth*, and had just penned the octosyllabic couplet—

‘By the pricking of my thumbs
Something wicked this way comes,’—

would have gained or lost by rhymelessly re-arranging the second line into—

‘Something wicked comes this way’!

Next, is it not the rhyme—and almost the rhyme alone—that constitutes the quotable quality of Milton’s

‘Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathed smiles’!

Then, too, was Herrick wrong in rhyming such a passage as

‘Gather ye rosebuds while ye may!
Old Time is still a-flying!
And this same flower that smiles to-day,
To-morrow will be dying’!

Did Goldsmith miss the mark when he crowded a whole comedy into a nutshell by saying in a pat rhyme—

‘For he that fights and runs away
May live to fight another day’!

What could Prior have done without rhyme to lend a more than common winsomeness to the pretty plea—

‘Be to her faults a little blind;
Be to her virtues very kind’!

What would Burns have gained by writing in his ambitious (and always cumbrous) prose his exquisite and melodious stanza—

‘Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met, or never parted.—
We had ne’er been broken-hearted’!

When Byron, a patriot of the true American spirit!—an ingrained Republican!—wrote his magnificent triplet—

‘For Freedom’s battle, once begun,
Bequeathed by bleeding sire to son,
Though baffled oft, is ever won,’—

perhaps he had in his fiery brain what the few great poets of the world are said each to have possessed; that is, the gift of prophecy; in which case, he must have foreseen that an English laureate, a generation later, would take a wise hint

from this tremendous triplication of rhymes, and would say with equal (though borrowed) thunder—

‘Their’s not to make reply,
Their’s not to reason why,
Their’s but to do and die.’

What except the rhyme could preserve the crispness of Scott’s snappy and happy proverb—

‘Oh what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive’!

How could Wordsworth, in a whole page of his unrhymed *Excursion*, have better expressed his subtle philosophy of external Nature than in the brief and simple rhyming stanza in which he said—

‘One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,—
Of moral evil, and of good,—
Than all the sages can’!

If Coleridge had laid a learned paper before the German Imperial Sanitary Commission, how could he have made his most urgent prose outdo the suggestiveness of these four rhyming lines—

‘The River Rhine, it is well known,
Doth wash the City of Cologne;
But tell me, nymphs, what power divine
Shall henceforth wash the River Rhine’!

Did Michael Barry, in all the prose which he wrote for Ireland in ’48, say anything more, or anything better, than he happily told in the following feather-winged words which will for ever keep flying over the whole world—

‘For whether on the scaffold high,
Or in the battle’s van,
The fittest place for man to die
Is where he dies for man’!

Did not Fitz-Green Halleck build to his friend Rodman Drake a ‘monument more enduring than brass’ when he stamped in pure gold the following rhyme—

‘Green be the turf above thee,
Friend of my better days!
None knew thee but to love thee,—
None named thee but to praise’!

I would like to see with what eloquent success John Ruskin—our present ‘warbler of poetic prose’—could turn

these next lines, by Tom Hood, into anything better than they are in their present rhyme—

‘I remember, I remember
The fir-trees dark and high:
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky!
It was a childish ignorance,—
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from Heaven
Than when I was a boy!’

Let some first-medallist in prose-composition, either at the British or the American ‘Cambridge University,’ attempt to un-rhyme and to re-furbish Whittier’s absolutely perfect and unalterable—

‘Old roads winding, as old roads will,
Here to a ferry, and there to a mill.’

Of course, there are certain things that cannot be said with any wit worth remembering at all, except they be said in rememberable rhyme; as, for instance, Tom Brown’s declaration *De Amicitia* thus:—

‘I do not like thee, Doctor Fell!
The reason why, I cannot tell:
But this I know—and know full well:
I do not like thee, Doctor Fell!’

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Now, therefore, with so many examples before me of the wise use of other forms of rhyme than the metallic forms of Dryden and Pope, I offer no apology for some endeavours which I have made in this book to carry rhyming to an unwonted, perhaps even to an unwarranted, degree.

Some of the verse-forms which I have ventured upon are here to be seen (so far as I know) for the first time. They are neither many nor noteworthy. I wish I had a greater variety to exhibit: for even if such unfilial departures from Pope and Dryden should not be relished at first, yet some of these forms might make a hopeful struggle for acceptance:—I mean the selfsame struggle to which Coleridge summons all writers, great and small, when he sagely points out to them that every literary work, every literary style, and every literary innovation must inevitably be judged, in the last resort, by the taste which it is itself able to create.

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Meanwhile, though there is great scope for invention in verse-metres, and especially in ballad-metres, yet I think that

there is a single and central principle which should run through all forms of verse, whether rhymed or unrhymed ; and that is, all verse-metres, but especially all ballad-metres—in other words, all tale-telling metres—should be written for the *voice*.

There is a theory at Oxford (among some of the professors) that the ancient Greeks and Romans had no habit of closet reading, and that in Athens and in Rome all poems were always read aloud or recited *vivâ voce*.

The erudite compilers of the *Corpus Poeticum Borealis* (Gudbrand Vigfusson and York Powell) have lent their authority to this opinion ; and, in fact, they go so far as to say—

‘ Silent reading was unknown to the ancients.’

This opinion is perhaps extravagant ; for we may suppose that Alexander the Great (who kept his *Homer* under his pillow, always within reach of his hand, in case of a sleepless night) probably did not always read to himself aloud.

Nevertheless, I think the rule to be not only rigorous but inexorable that any and every poem, of whatsoever sort or style, from the brief ballad to the long epic, ought to be so written that it can not only be read silently, but aloud.

In fact, no poem which has any real melody in it can ever be properly enjoyed, or can ever be correctly judged, except only by the ear.

Herein lies one of the many charming secrets of Shakespeare’s style : for we know that every sentence which he wrote was always for the voice and for the ear : and he was probably a masterly reader of his own lines. So was Tennyson. So, too, is Swinburne (and may this still living music-maker continue for many years both to write and to read his melodious verse !)

Some of the old English prose-writers, Sir Thomas Brown, for instance, also Izaak Walton, are somewhat hard to read aloud (their pages having been penned for the eye alone—or, in other words, for ‘ silent reading ’).

I once had occasion, during a lecture season, to read aloud to a series of winter audiences, night after night, John Stuart Mill’s beautiful tribute to his dead wife ; a very noble piece of English prose, lacking no grace but one alone, namely, an easy adaptability to the voice ; and I well remember how

I always dreaded the irksome moment when I came to the point of delivering the excellent yet non-fluent lines.

On the other hand, how easily a mute and closet reader may open his mouth and say aloud—

‘To be or not to be, that is the question!’

In like manner all Shakespeare runs ‘trippingly on the tongue’: and if our great dramatist had chosen to turn now and then from making plays to making ballads, what splendid metres he would have devised, in order to show the carrying power of the human voice!

To make my meaning still plainer by illustration, I will here quote from Mill the dedication to which I have just referred; and I will quote in juxtaposition with it the words which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Marc Antony after Antony has just heard of Caesar’s death.

Let the reader read aloud first as follows:—

‘To the beloved and deplored memory of her who was the inspirer, and in part the author, of all that is best in my writings—the friend and wife whose exalted sense of truth and right was my strongest incitement, and whose approbation was my chief reward—I dedicate this volume. Like all that I have written for many years, it belongs as much to her as to me; but the work as it stands has had, in a very insufficient degree, the inestimable advantage of her revision; some of the more important portions having been reserved for a more careful re-examination which they are now never destined to receive. Were I but capable of interpreting to the world one half the great thoughts and noble feelings which are buried in her grave, I should be the medium of a greater benefit to it, than is ever likely to arise from anything that I can write, unprompted, and unassisted by her all but unrivalled wisdom.’

Having read aloud the above passage, let the reader immediately read aloud the following:—

‘O mighty Caesar! Dost thou lie so low?
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure?—Fare thee well!—
I know not, gentlemen, what you intend,
Who else must be let blood, who else is rank:
If I myself, there is no hour so fit
As Caesar’s death-hour; nor no instrument
Of half that worth as those your swords, made rich
With the most noble blood of all this world!
I do beseech ye, if ye bear me hard,—
Now, whilst your purpled hands do reek and smoke,
Fulfil your pleasure. Live a thousand years,
I shall not find myself so apt to die:
No place will please me so, no mean of death,
As here by Caesar, and by you cut off,
The choice and master-spirits of this age.’

The experiment which I have thus recommended—namely, the reading aloud of the above brace of comparative passages—will show that the eloquent philosopher forgot to adapt his magnificent prose to the voice; a sort of forgetfulness into which our ‘Poet Paramount,’ with his vocal smoothness, never falls!

Let me therefore here borrow the wit of the old Latin epigrammatist Martial:—

‘Quem recitas, meus est, O Fidentine, libellus;
Sed male cum recitas, incipit esse tuus.’

And I will take the liberty to paraphrase the above quotation thus:—

I charge you, my dear reader, to consider that this book, which I hope you will read aloud, is *mine*; but that if you read it *badly*, it will be *yours*!

* *

The translations in this volume are ‘few and far between’; for I am of Andrew Lang’s opinion that, as a rule, a translator of other people’s poems is apt to please only himself.

* *

I am no ‘spelling-reformer’; and therefore I have not ventured to introduce into the following pages any of the recent (and perhaps commendable) innovations in the way of spelling. The only exception to this remark is the word ‘again,’ which will be here found systematically spelt ‘agen.’ A few people say ‘again,’ rhyming with rain or pain: but ninety-nine out of a hundred say ‘agen,’ rhyming with pen and then. To keep both pronunciations is confusing. Accordingly the old style, both of pronouncing and also of spelling this word, is here adopted from Dryden, who used it as follows:—

‘Borne far asunder by the tides of *men*,
Like adamant and steel they meet *agen*.’

The same pronunciation is given in *Old Tarlton’s Song* (dated London, 1642), thus:—

‘The King of France went up the hill
With twenty thousand men:
The King of France came down the hill,
And ne’er went up *agen*.’

* *

'The Creepmouse Club,' of Paris—which the reader will find occasionally mentioned in the following pages)—no longer exists.

It was a private circle of literary friends (English and American) who, for a time, were in the habit of meeting on Saturday nights on the small island in the Seine, known as the 'Ile Saint Louis,' in the rear of the Cathedral of Nôtre Dame.

The founder and leading spirit of the club was the late Mr. Henry W. Macaulay, a young and accomplished Englishman, whose sudden death from climatic fever while travelling in Siam—together also with the death, not long afterward, of two other members, Mr. Edward Chamier (of *The Westminster Review*) and Mr. William J. A. Fuller (of the New York bar)—put a sad end to the gay meetings of 'The Creepmice.'

Mr. Macaulay (a kinsman of the historian) had more gifts and graces than usually fall to the lot even of one of Nature's prime favourites: he was a scholar, a writer, a painter, a musician, a chess-player of the highest grade, and a champion oarsman and athlete. He was the youngest member of the coterie; and with his youth, his energy, his diversity of resources, and his sympathetic temperament, he was the life and soul of the meetings.

It was at Mr. Macaulay's suggestion that some of the lighter pieces which will be found in this book had their origin as 'skits' for 'The Creepmouse Club.'

*
* *

And now as to this large and formidable volume, whether my project of gathering together all these poems, some of which have been flying about for nearly forty years, will result in my thus offering, in some slight degree, an acceptable contribution to the literature of my country, I cannot pretend to judge. A few of these pieces have been popular, but only a few. And the most that I can claim, either for these or for the rest, is that I have tried to put them, each and all, into plain English. Moreover, these poems have not been written in the 'subjective,' but in the 'objective' manner. They are also, as a rule, in a narrative form. Accordingly the *fin-de-siècle* 'fad' that a poem ought to be a dim and filmy

essay on metaphysics, or a deep and puzzling dissertation on philosophy, finds no confirmation anywhere in all these nine hundred pages. Furthermore, if these ballads, considered as tales, are not told with such clearness as to make their drift and meaning at once comprehended either by a sailor swinging in his hammock, or by a housewife rocking her cradle, or even by a bright boy who is old enough to be fond of a book, then these pages are printed in vain, and may better be used for lighting the kitchen fire !

* *

One word more :—

This Edition has a prose accompaniment which the Author hopes may have an interest apart from the poems. It came about thus : 'The Chameleon's Dish, or Carl Olaf's Canticle' (the longest of the poems), is a Norwegian story ; and, on its original publication, it chanced to awaken (in some degree) among the Americans in Paris a curiosity concerning the Old Norse or Scandinavian mythology.

To satisfy this inquiry, the present volume is furnished with an Appendix in which I have tried (to the best of my imperfect knowledge) to give a curt yet just and clear synopsis of the splendid fables and legends of this noble, piquant, and suggestive mythology. It is a mythology that deserves to rank next to the Greek and Roman, and which ought not to be suffered to remain (as at present) practically unknown to the general public both in England and in the United States. It is a mythology which may be truthfully claimed to be our own by birthright ; for it is a precious heirloom which comes down to both nations from the Gothic ancestors of the whole English-speaking race throughout the world. It is a mythology which therefore, instead of having died out, has merely grown dim, and is destined to burn as long as Tullia's lamp.

PARIS,
April, 1897.

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THE present 'Complete Edition of the Author's Poetical Works' is made up, partly of several previous books and brochures which have been published at various times during the last thirty years, and partly of new and supplementary poems not heretofore in print.

Hence, in the ensuing pages, the whole bulk of the contents, both old and new, will be found rearranged so as to constitute one continuous and homogeneous collection, irrespective of all the former and fragmentary editions.

This rearrangement here brings together, in a single series, under a single title, and in a single volume, all the Author's poems written from 1858 to 1897.

Usually, in printing a volume of poetry, the *longest* poem is printed as the opening piece.

This has been done in all the Author's previous issues; for instance, in 'THE SEXTON'S TALE and Other Poems,' in 'SWABIAN STORIES,' in 'THOU AND I,' in 'THE CHAMELEON'S DISH,' in 'HEART'S EASE,' &c.

But in the present 'Complete Edition' this usage has been discarded.

No poem here takes precedence on account of its length; but, on the contrary, all the poems, whether long or short, are made to follow each other in the chronological order in which they were written.

Meanwhile, the titles and dates of the several previous and component volumes have already been given in detail in the Preface.

In the following Table of Contents the interval of time from 1858 to 1897 will, for convenience of reference, be divided into separate decades, so that the poems of each decade may stand in a group by themselves.

These five groups or subdivisions will therefore range chronologically as follows :—1858 to 1860, 1860 to 1870, 1870 to 1880, 1880 to 1890, and 1890 to 1897.

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POEMS

POEMS



THE KING'S RING.

I.

ONCE in Persia reigned a King
Who, upon his signet-ring,
Graved a maxim true and wise,
Which, if held before his eyes,
Gave him counsel, at a glance,
Fit for every change or chance :
Solemn words, and these are they :
'Even this shall pass away!'

II.

Trains of camels through the sand
Brought him gems from Samarcand ;
Fleets of galleys through the seas
Brought him pearls to rival these ;
But he reckoned not as gain
Treasures of the mine or main :
'What is wealth?' the King would say,—
'Even this shall pass away!'

III.

In the revels of his court,
At the zenith of the sport,
When the palms of all his guests
Burned with clapping at his jests,
He, amid his figs and wine,
Cried, 'O loving friends of mine,
Pleasure comes, but not to stay :
Even this shall pass away!'

2

Lady fairest ever seen
Was the bride he crowned his Queen.
Pillowed on his marriage-bed,
Whispering to his soul, he said,
'Though a bridegroom never prest
Dearer bosom to his breast,
Mortal flesh must come to day:
Even thou shalt pass away.'

Fighting on a furious field
 Over a javelin thrust he should
 Soldiers with a loud lament
 Have him bleeding to his rest
 Grieving from his father's side
 "There is none of them to guide
 "None will pardon, say to me
 "None will stand with me"

[illegible]

22

THE DANSKER'S REVENGE.

On the Sea-beach in Jutland.

A.D. 1655.

I.

THIS golden legend first was told
When Swedes and Danes were foes of old.

II.

One sultry morning, on a dune,
The battle ended at the noon.

III.

Two foes lay sweltering in the sand,
Each wounded by the other's hand.

IV.

The Swede cried out, 'O day accurst,
That sees a soldier die of thirst!'

V.

'My flask is full,' the Dane replied,
'Enough for both—I will divide!'

VI.

'I filled it at a crystal spring—
Drink thou to Denmark and the King!—

VII.

'Drink first—drink fairly—half for each!
Drink while the King rides up the beach!'

VIII.

The Swede, not having drunk since morn,
Reached out and seized the drinking-horn.

IX.

But when the horn was in his clutch,
'The half,' he thought, 'will not be much!—

X.

'What is the half, or any part?'
So, with a devil in his heart,—

XI.

'O Dane,' he cried, 'if thee I kill,
The whole is mine, to drink my fill!'

XII.

Then creeping to his generous foe,
Till close enough to strike a blow,

XIII.

The dastard raised his murderous hand,
But missed, and poniarded the sand.

XIV.

Outspake the Dane, 'O hellish Swede,
How durst thou do so base a deed?—

XV.

'But I will take revenge, O knave!'
So snatching back the flask he gave,

XVI.

He touched it to his own dry tongue,
And though he was with anguish wrung,

XVII.

Yet with a loud, contemptuous laugh,
He said, 'I leave thee just a half!'

XVIII.

'So curse thy loss, O greedy soul!
I meant to bid thee drink the whole!'

XIX.

The King of Denmark galloped by,
Who chanced to hear the Dane's reply,

XX.

And cried, 'Accept this golden chain!—
I dub thee Knight, O noble Dane!'

XXI.

Uprose a noise of Danish cheers—
Heard yet through thrice a hundred years!

XXII.

So every hero hath reward—
Of men—of kings—or of the Lord!

IN MEMORIAM.

AN ACROSTIC.

THESE roses, planted on her grave, have blown :
Her memory, still too fresh for graven stone,
Endures as written on our hearts alone !
O loving friend, when thee we hither bore,
Dim were our eyes, and black the weeds we wore :
Our grief hath since grown less—our love grown more !
Sweet gift of God¹, Whose gift we could not keep !—
If ever angels watch where willows weep,
A wall of folded wings shall guard thy sleep !

THE MYSTERY OF NATURE.

I.

THE works of God are fair for nought
Unless our eyes, in seeing,
See, hidden in the thing, the thought
That animates its being.

II.

The outward form is not the whole,
But every part is moulded
To image forth an inward soul
That dimly is unfolded.

III.

The shadow, pictured in the lake
By every tree that trembles,
Is cast for more than just the sake
Of that which it resembles.

IV.

The dew falls nightly, not alone
Because the meadows need it,
But hath an errand of its own
To human souls that heed it.

¹ Theodosia, 'gift of God.'

V.

The stars are lighted in the skies
Not merely for their shining,
But, like the looks of loving eyes,
Have meanings worth divining.

VI.

The waves that moan along the shore,
The winds that sigh in blowing,
Are sent to teach a mystic lore
Which men are wise in knowing.

VII.

The clouds around the mountain-peak,
The rivers in their winding,
Have secrets which, to all who seek,
Are precious in the finding.

VIII.

Thus Nature dwells within our reach,
But, though we stand so near her,
We still interpret half her speech
With ears too dull to hear her.

IX.

Whoever at the coarsest sound
Still listens for the finest,
Shall hear the noisy world go round
To music the divinest.

X.

Whoever yearns to see aright
Because his heart is tender,
Shall catch a glimpse of heavenly light
In every earthly splendour.

XI.

So, since the universe began,
And till it shall be ended,
The soul of Nature, soul of Man,
And soul of God are blended !

THE GOATHERD'S GIFT.

TO thee, fair Shepherdess, I bring this rose,—
This red and fiery flower of love,—that grows
For all true lovers, and is love's own sign
Whereby who gives it (or who takes it) knows
That both their hearts are one,—like mine and thine!
I say, like mine and thine: Do I presume?
And am I over-bold? O maiden mine,—
If mine thou art, then wear my rose,—whose bloom
(That borrows thine) is love's own type!—Behold,
Though rains, though storms, though tempests manifold,
With all their floods, this burning flower have drenched,
Yet all their many waters have not quenched
Its ever-quenchless fire,—like love's own flame!
So take my rose,—and find my love the same!

DYING AND YET LIVING.

I.

SHE died—yet is not dead!
Ye saw a daisy on her tomb:
It bloomed to die—she died to bloom:
Her summer hath not sped.

II.

She died—yet is not dead!
Ye saw her jewels all unset:
But God let fall a coronet
To crown her ransomed head.

III.

She died—yet is not dead!
Ye saw her gazing toward a sky
Whose lights are hid from mortal eye:
She lingered—yearned—and fled.

IV.

She died—yet is not dead!
Through pearly gate, on golden street,
She went her way with shining feet:—
Go ye, and thither tread!

MALTBY CHAPEL.

A CROMWELLIAN EPISODE.

I.

MALTBY Chapel, as you know,
 Fell three hundred years ago :
 Hardly now is left a stone
 Save upon the graves alone.
 If your feet should chance to pass,
 Weary, through the churchyard grass,
 Rest them by a double tomb
 Crumbling over bride and groom,
 Who, as soon as they were wed,
 Found the grave their bridal-bed.

II.

Flowering in the wall on high,
 Like a garden in the sky,
 Stood the oriel of the fane,—
 Whence, through many a mottled pane,
 Lights of purple, blue, and red
 Down through nave and aisle were shed.

Central in the fair design
 Hung the Sorrowing Man divine :
 Near Him, gazing, knelt or stood
 Mary's weeping sisterhood :
 Next, with colours interchanged,
 Holy emblems round were ranged
 (First a bright, and then a dark) ;—
 Here the Lion of Saint Mark ;
 There the Eagle of Saint John ;
 Cherub heads with pinions on ;
 Virgin lilies, white as frost ;
 Palm and olive branches, crossed ;
 Picture of the Paschal Lamb ;
 Letters of the great I AM ;
 Last and topmost, Cross and Crown,
 And a White Dove flying down.
 Such a window, in the light,
 Was itself a wondrous sight ;
 But the eyes that on it gazed
 Saw devoutly, as it blazed,

Not the hue of red or blue,—
Not the sunshine slanting through,—
But, beyond the lucent wall,
Heaven itself outshining all!

III.

Up through Maltby's dusty road
Cromwell and his pikemen strode,—
Six and twenty hundred strong,—
Roaring forth a battle song;
Who, in marching to the fray,
Passed the chapel on their way;
Never dreaming how, inside,
Knelt a bridegroom and his bride,—
She the daughter of a peer,
He a knight and cavalier.

Quoth the leader, 'Rub the stains
Out of yonder painted panes!'

Then a pikeman with his pike—
Gaily!—as if glad to strike!—
Drew it backward half its length,
Poised it, and with all his strength
Hurled it whizzing through the air,
Sped it with a pious prayer,
Winged it with a holy curse,
Barbed it with a Scripture verse,
Heard it dash through pane and sash
Till, above the tinkling crash,
Loud his shouting mates exclaimed,
'Bravo, Ironsides! well-aimed!
So may every church of sin
Have the light of God let in!'

IV.

Then what happened you may guess!
O what havoc and distress!
First, the pike that had been hurled
Smote the Saviour of the world—
Tearing out the sacred Tree
Where He hung for you and me:
Then the rushing weapon passed
Through the chancel, flying fast—
Flashing from the shaft each hue
Which it caught in quivering through,—

Curving toward the bridal pair
 Where they both were bowed in prayer—
 Flying down like Death's own dart
 Straight into the bride's own heart!

Back she fell against the floor,
 Lying crimson in her gore,
 Till her bloodless face grew pale
 Like the whiteness of her veil.

v.

Years may come and years may go
 Ere a mortal man shall know
 Such a more than mortal pain
 As the knight felt in his brain!
 Long he knelt beside the dead!
 Long he kissed her face and head!
 Long he clasped her pulseless palm,
 He in tempest, she in calm!
 Stricken by his anguish dumb,
 Neither words nor tears would come;
 Till at last, with groan and shriek,
 This is what he tried to speak:
 'O sweet body! turned to clay—
 Since thy soul hath fled away,
 Let this lingering soul of mine
 Lift its wings and fly to thine!
Wed us in Thy Heavens, O Lord!

Rose he then, and drew his sword,
 Braced its hilt against the wood
 Of the altar where he stood,
 Leaned his breast against its point,
 Stiffened every limb and joint,
 Clenched his hands about the blade,
 Muttered words as if he prayed,—
 Then, with one ecstatic breath,
 Cast himself upon his death!

vi.

Hence the churchyard has a yew
 Growing by a tomb for two,—
 For the grave was dug so wide
 Both could slumber side by side.
 But, though lovers fall to dust,
 As their mortal bodies must,
 Still, to souls that interblend,
 Love itself can never end.

VII.

Back to Maltby came once more
 Cromwell, fiercer than before,—
 Chasing Rupert,—who, distressed,
 Sought a refuge and a rest,
 Thought the chapel bullet-proof,
 Camped his men beneath its roof,
 Stood defiant for a day,
 Fiery as a stag at bay,
 Made a grim defence, but vain,—
 Then, in darkness and in rain,
 Fearful of the morrow's fight,
 Stole away at dead of night.

When the Roundheads saw with rage
 How the bird had quit the cage,
 They, in spite, with blow on blow,
 Fought the chapel for a foe!
 So it came that tower and bell,
 Roof and spire, together fell,—
 Battered down, in name of Heaven,
 April, sixteen forty-seven!

1858.

 THE LOTUS-PLANTER.

I.

ONCE on an empty lotus-pod
 A Brahmin wrote the name of God.

II.

Then, having written it, he said:
 'A pod without a seed is dead:

III.

'And yet the name of God hath power
 To make it sprout and yield a flower:

IV.

'So I will plant it,—with a prayer
 That Heaven will make it bloom and bear.'

V.

He planted the poor hollow thing
 As if it were a seed of Spring.

VI.

A Slave near by, who clanked a chain,
Fell fainting on the dusty plain.

VII.

The Brahmin, pitying, straightway ran
And lifted up the fallen man.

VIII.

How strange that such a kindly deed
Was counter to the Brahmin's creed !

IX.

The deed scarce done, he looked aghast
At touching one beneath his caste !

X.

'O God!' he cried, 'I am unclean!—
My hand has helped the vile and mean!'

XI.

Whereat, ere he could flee the place,
God wrought for him an act of grace.

XII.

The pod took instantaneous root,
And sprang by miracle to fruit !

XIII.

Strange fruit ! Around a bulb of red,
There ran a writing, and it said :

XIV.

*'Count others as of equal caste,—
And count thyself as least and last.'*

XV.

Transfigured in a sudden light,
The Slave stood sacred in his sight.

XVI.

Then clutching at the Bondman's chain,
The Brahmin cried, 'The truth is plain !

XVII.

'For what is rank? and what is birth?
And what is honour on the earth?

XVIII.

'In Heaven, O Slave, the humblest soul
Shall wear the brightest aureole!

XIX.

'Off with thy fetters, and be crowned!—
And, in thy stead, let *me* be bound!

THE SEXTON'S TALE.

AN OXONIAN ROMANCE.

(Thirteenth Century.)

THE following ballad is based on incidents that occurred at Oxford during the reign of Cœur de Lion.

The graveyard here referred to was the original 'God's Acre' then adjoining Osney Abbey.

This famous abbey—dating from Henry I to Henry VIII—was once the largest monastery in England; but all that now remains of it is an old mill on the water-edge of Osney meadow, at a spot where the river Isis breaks the meadow into several isles.

The spokesman in this ballad was the octogenarian Sacristan or Sexton of Osney churchyard during King John's boisterous days.

In pointing out to visitors the principal tombstones and epitaphs, the garrulous old grave-digger was in the habit of narrating certain of his personal reminiscences, as given in this ballad.

The monuments to which he refers (and which were then of comparatively recent erection) now no longer exist: for though, by the Tudor act of Dissolution, the graveyard was spared for a time, yet the consecrated ground was subsequently secularized—first for cloth-factories, then for rope-walks and other industries—until finally the Great Western Railway now runs directly over the Abbey ruins, and speeds into Oxford by a short cut through the ancient cloister and 'God's Acre.'

It was in the year A.D. 1219 that the old Sexton told to Master Gilroy Montacute (a London architect), the following tale:

I.

A KNIGHT, sir, from the Holy Land
Came back to claim my Lady's hand.
[This grave is his where now we stand.]

II.

Her sire, the Duke, was wroth, and said
That she was still too young to wed.
[How thick the leaves are where we tread!]

III.

I was her thrall, and I can swear
That not on earth—I care not where—
Was there another face so fair!

IV.

A maid who knows her father's will,
And weds against it, comes to ill.
[Stand here—the winter wind is chill.]

V.

And yet a woman, sir, I say,
Should be allowed her will and way
In what concerns her wedding-day.

VI.

So when the Duke took helm and lance
And sailed to join a joust in France,
My Lady saw her golden chance.

VII.

If once the holy knot were tied,
Her sire, nor all the world beside,
Could part the bridegroom and the bride.

VIII.

Her plan—a secret most profound—
Was kept from all the gossips round
Until the chimes began to sound.

IX.

Then how it came, I cannot tell,
But never such a woe befell
The ringing of a wedding-bell.

X.

For while the priest was at his prayer,
The Duke—the Devil knows from where—
Burst in upon the married pair!

XI.

One faces winter, though it blows
And frosts one's breath—and so we rose
And faced him, though our pulses froze.

XII.

The Duke had sword and shield and squire;
The Knight was in his wedding-tire;
They fronted, and their eyes flashed fire!

XIII.

Then turned the father to his child
And touched her wedding-ring, and smiled;
Whereat we thought him reconciled!

XIV.

Quoth he, 'My daughter and my son,
Against my will the deed is done;
But twain whom God hath joined are one.

XV.

'Now follow to my castle-hall!
Come old and young! come great and small!
A feast awaiteth one and all!'

XVI.

It was a lie the tyrant told!
His soul was to the Devil sold!
[*Hic jacet*—here's his rotten mould!]

XVII.

Thus cheated forward to their fate,
The lovers reached the castle-gate—
Where, hid behind it, lay in wait

XVIII.

Five henchmen who—like hounds in check,
Yet daring at their master's beck
To grip a lion by the neck—

XIX.

Sprang at the Knight, and girt him round,
And hurled him headlong to the ground,
And held him like a lion bound!

XX.

Outspake the Duke—the double-faced!—
'Thy wife shall be a virgin chaste
And never in thine arms embraced!

XXI.

'This wall shall thee and thine divide,
And make thee bridegroom to a bride
Divorced for ever from thy side!'

XXII.

The Knight, unhanded, never spoke—
But stood as dumb as when an oak
Replies not to the thunderstroke.

XXIII.

I watched my Lady's colour fade;
She fainted to a deathly shade,
And lay as if her grave were made.

XXIV.

Whereat the Duke to me made sign
To lift her with these arms of mine,
And bear her in, and give her wine.

XXV.

I raised my Lady all aghast,—
And loud behind me, as I passed,
The gate was slammed, and bolted fast.

XXVI.

The groom without, the bride within :—
But such a sundering was a sin,
For wedded hearts are more than kin.

XXVII.

[Hark how the ravens croak and scold!—
A sign the season will be cold.]
My Lady would not be consoled :

XXVIII.

She woke with such a start and fright,
And wept in such a widowed plight,
That I was melted at the sight.

XXIX.

But woman's love is wondrous strong!
I helped to right my Lady's wrong:
I shall not make the story long :

xxx.

On Christmas-eve, the castle-wall
Was hung with holly, and the hall
Was thronged with guests: she fled them all,

xxxI.

And mutely as a mouse could stir
Stept to the postern, clad in fur,
And asked, was I a friend to her?

xxxII.

I made obeisance on my knee.
'May Heaven be thy reward!' said she,
'Unlock the gate, and set me free!'

xxxIII.

Oh when is ever seen or heard
Such majesty of look or word
As when a woman's soul is stirred?

xxxIV.

I durst have swung that postern-gate
Wide open then, had Death or Fate
Stood there to bid the hinges grate!

xxxv.

I slid the bolt at her command,
And she—the Lady of the Land!—
Caught up and kissed this rough old hand

xxxvi.

I heard a champing horse outside:
The bridegroom waited for his bride:
'Farewell!' I cried, 'God speed the ride!'

xxxvII.

A single thing I hate to say:
It pricks me to this very day:
The Knight threw back his purse for pay!

xxxvIII.

It lies there yet, for aught I know!
The hand my Lady honoured so
Disdained to lift a bribe so low!

XXXIX.

The Duke was wroth, but never knew
Who drew the bolt to let her through.
[There, that's my Lady's next to you!]

XL.

Ah well! the ways of God are right:
My Lady's babe was born at night:
My Lady died at morning-light:—

XLI.

Sweet fragile stalk! that grew too rare
The burden of its bud to bear,
And broke while blossoming so fair!

XLII.

In one white sheet they both were dressed:
Then, with her boy upon her breast,
I laid my Lady here at rest.

XLIII.

The Knight, heart-broken, hardly stayed
Until my Lady's mound was made,
But joined the very next Crusade.

XLIV.

Now though he tried in many a fight
To meet his death, if so he might,
Yet God—whose ways, I said, are right—

XLV.

Preserved him till the wars were done,
And brought him back from Turk and Hun
To seek the grave of wife and son.

XLVI.

I hardly knew him when he came—
For he was changed, and not the same—
So wasted was his giant frame!

XLVII.

But here among the graves, one morn,
A Pilgrim, with a beard unshorn,
And with a haggard look forlorn,

XLVIII.

Came with a palm-branch, all alone,
And at my Lady's tomb, moss-grown,
Threw down his trophy on her stone:

XLIX.

Then knelt awhile—and walked away:
And just a month from that same day
I wrapt a shroud about his clay.

L.

So here's the bride, and there's the groom:
But come and see my Lady's tomb
When summer roses are in bloom:

LI.

For now the winter wrongs the dead
By hedging thus her hallowed bed
With thorns and tanglewoods instead.

LII.

The groom lies parted from the bride;
But Life and Love, that here divide,
Are joined upon the Other Side¹!

¹ The above ballad was written several years before the Author had visited Oxford. He afterwards availed himself of a prolonged opportunity to learn, on the spot, something of the local history and topography of that most interesting town on the whole earth. But no subsequent search through the town archives, though he examined them with care, and with the help of the Bodleian Library, enabled him to verify the foregoing tale. Every University town, of course, has a hundred local, mouldy and book-wormy traditions—which cannot be substantiated, yet which cannot be gainsaid. This ballad belongs to this unverifiable class.

On the other hand, two other Oxford ballads—both written later, and after a residence in that city—are given in the present volume, accompanied with documentary attestations of their authenticity.

One of these ballads, 'Great Tom of Oxford' (to be found at page 346) sets forth the strange history of the big bell which formerly hung in the tower of Osney Abbey, and which now hangs over the gateway of Christ Church.

The other Oxford ballad, 'King John's Ride to Runnymede' (at page 313) narrates how the king was forced to quit his banquet-table in Beaumont Palace, during a midnight carousal, and to gallop from Oxford—an all-night's ride to Runnymede—in order to sign *Magna Charta* the next morning.

If therefore 'The Sexton's Tale'—pertaining as it does (like these two other ballads) to the same period, and to the same locality (namely, to Oxford in the thirteenth century),—be entitled to something like the same degree of historic credit, then in all probability the angry duke, who snatched his daughter from her bridegroom in Osney Church, was the castellan of the Oxford fortress known as St. George's Castle, which is still standing.

Of course, as to whether he was a D'Oiley or a Beauchamp—nobody cares which: but it seems a pity, on the other hand, not to know for a certainty the names of the bride and groom. A mere conjecture is that the lady was Rosalie de Beauchamp, and that her husband was Sir Godfrey à Godstowe. But guesswork is seldom history, though history is often guesswork.

TRANSPLANTED.

From Goethe.

'Ich ging im Walde.'

I ROAMED the forest
In quest of nought
Save flitting fancy
And flying thought.

A hidden blossom
I chanced to spy—
As bright as Hesper,
Or woman's eye.

I wished to pluck it,
But heard it say—
'Must I be broken
And flung away?'

Then up I dug it,
The root and all,
To grace the garden
Beside my hall.

There did I plant it
In sheltered ground,
And there it blushes
The whole year round.

THE FISHERMAN'S CHILD.

I.

I HEARD it at the Isle of Rhu¹,
And though the tale is but a dream,
Yet dreams (you know) are often true—
However strange they seem.

II.

Now when a dream drops from the sky,
The dreamer is a lucky man
To catch it ere it passes by—
And keep it if he can.

¹ In the Adriatic.

III.

So silent was the summer day
That one could hear the far-off bees,
Till down from over fields of hay
Came winds to rough the seas.

IV.

A fisher brought his nets to land;
And just above the water's reach
He drew his wherry up the sand,
And hurried from the beach.

V.

It chanced that to the water's edge
His little son came running down
To gather river-weeds and sedge—
To twine himself a crown.

VI.

Now when he saw the stranded craft,
He clambered up the side in glee,
And tossed his head, and leapt and laughed,
And wished himself at sea.

VII.

The boat, amid the watery roar,
Was like a warning finger laid
Across the lips of sea and shore,
To hush the noise they made.

VIII.

A breaker, with a headlong swell,
Ran up around it where it lay,
And rolled so high that when it fell
It launched the boat away.

IX.

The myrtle-shrubs grew dense and green,
Between the fisher and the tide,—
And sadder sight was never seen
Than up they stood to hide.

X.

For by the breeze the drifting hull
Was blown beyond the harbour-light,
Till seaward, like a flying gull,
It dwindled out of sight.

XI.

Through all the livelong afternoon
The wherry (for the wind was free)
Fled further out from the lagoon
Into the open sea.

XII.

Meanwhile the fisher sat to mend
Each ragged rift in every net:—
A task that came not to an end
Until the sun was set.

XIII.

And so he never called his child
Until the west was all aflame,—
But then, except an echo wild,
No voice in answer came.

XIV.

Whereat, as with a giant's hand,
He seized his one remaining boat
And dragged it down the griping sand
And through the surf afloat.

XV.

He pulled his oars for thrice a league
Till down his brawny beard ran sweat,
But not a sinew felt fatigue,
For hope inspired him yet.

XVI.

The mantle of the night grew dark,
Wherein his eyes were folded blind;
And so he chased the truant barque,
To seek, but not to find.

XVII.

At last his strength was overspent,—
And down against his panting breast
His hot, bewildered head he bent,
And swooned, and lay at rest.

XVIII.

He dreamed that through a yawning wave
A child with sea-grass on his head
Went down within a boundless grave
To wander with the dead.

XIX.

Thence rising to a wondrous land,
The human creature grew divine ;
And when the dreamer waved his hand,
The child gave back a sign.

XX.

The sleeper, waking with a start,
And shuddering in the chilly dew,
Knew well, by token in his heart,
The vision must be true.

XXI.

In sorrow homeward he returned,
And sank weary in his chair,
And gazing where the embers burned
He saw the spectre there !

XXII.

The fisher's neighbours on the coast
Are honest people, and they say
That nightly at his hearth the ghost
Abides till break of day.

XXIII.

Now ask me not how near or far,
Or by what hidden jasper sea,
Or in what undiscovered star
The throne of God may be !

XXIV.

But this I know,—that here below
He sends his angels from on high,
For Jacob saw them come and go
Betwixt the earth and sky.

XXV.

And what a holy peace it brings
To know that from the heavenly sphere
They fly to earth, and fold their wings—
To dwell with mortals here !



THE FLY.

A NURSERY SONG.

[To the tune of 'Lightly Row.']

I.

BABY Bye,
Here's a Fly:
Let us watch him, you and I.
How he crawls
Up the walls—
Yet he never falls!
I believe, with those six legs,
You and I could walk on eggs!
There he goes,
On his toes,
Tickling Baby's nose!

II.

Spots of red
Dot his head:
Rainbows on his wings are spread!
That small speck
Is his neck:
See him nod and beck!
I can show you, if you choose,
Where to look to find his shoes:
Three small pairs
Made of hairs—
These he always wears.

III.

Black and brown
Is his gown:
He can wear it upside down!
It is laced
Round his waist:
I admire his taste!
Pretty as his clothes are made,
He will spoil them, I'm afraid,
If to-night
He gets sight
Of the candle-light.

IV.

In the sun
Webs are spun :
What if he gets into one !
When it rains
He complains
On the window-panes !
Tongues to talk have you and I :
God has given the little Fly
No such things :
So he sings
With his buzzing wings.

V.

He can eat
Bread and meat :
See his mouth between his feet !
On his back
Hangs a sack
Like a pedlar's pack :
Does the Baby understand ?
Then the Fly shall kiss her hand !
Put a crumb
On her thumb :
Maybe he will come !

VI.

Round and round,
On the ground,
On the ceiling he is found.
Catch him ? No :
Let him go :
Never hurt him so !
Now you see his wings of silk
Drabbled in the Baby's milk !
Fie, oh fie !
Foolish Fly !
How will he get dry ?

VII.

All wet flies
Twist their thighs :
So they wipe their heads and eyes !
Cats, you know,
Wash just so :
Then their whiskers grow !

Flies have hair too short to comb!
 Flies go barehead out from home!
 But the Gnat
 Wears a hat:
 Do you laugh at that?

VIII.

Flies can see
 More than we—
 So how bright their eyes must be!
 Little Fly,
 Mind your eye—
 Spiders are near by!
 Now a secret let me tell:
 Spiders will not treat you well!
 So I say,
 Heed your way!
 Little Fly, good day!¹

1859.

¹ As this nursery-song—written nearly forty years ago—had the good fortune not only to win a wide popularity, but also to be the precursor of a more naturalistic style of juvenile literature than was then in vogue, I beg to cite here a few statements from a letter by Dr. William A. Croffut, referring to these verses.

This distinguished American journalist, after a visit which he made to me in Paris, wrote in the *Washington Star* (District of Columbia), October, 1894, as follows:

"Theodore Tilton and I studied phonography in the same class when we were boys, and we have kept the old friendship alive. . . . And when I said to him, "Theodore, your *Baby Bye, Here's a Fly*, is in a million American school-books, and I would have given my pen-finger to have written it!"—he answered, "That little song was written some thirty-five years ago for my daughter Florence, then a child. I was spending my summer vacation at Newburgh, on the Hudson. My neighbour was the well-known New York physician, Dr. Carroll Dunham. He was a great lover of natural history, and a daily devotee to the microscope. We used to ride together over the Newburgh hills, examining every nook and corner to find strange flowers and insects. One day he burst out with great indignation at the flimsy and inaccurate use of scientific facts in the prevailing literature for children. He had bought an illustrated book for his little boy, and was disgusted to find in it a picture of a spider with *six* instead of *eight* legs. The annoyed scientist tore out the offending page and flung it away. I was much impressed by this act. So I immediately set at work and wrote *The Fly*. After the verses were finished, I handed them to him." "Let us see," he said, "if they will bear the test of the microscope—or, at least, let us see if you have given your fly his six proper legs—which is the number he ought to have—instead of eight—which would change him from an insect, and make him insectivorous." Dr. Dunham's gifted wife—the author of the "Mary Brown" series of travels—did me the honour to vote with her husband in deciding that my little piece did not violate the facts of nature, and that it contained no stanza to be angrily torn out and flung away. . . . How long ago that song was written! And how long, alas! those two

friends—who were the first to take an interest in *The Fly*—have now been in their graves!’

To the foregoing extract from Dr. Croffut’s published narrative, I will add a word concerning the old-fashioned, careless, and inaccurate representations of natural history which disfigured American children’s picture-books and primers down to the middle of the nineteenth century, and even later.

The incident already mentioned, of a spider with a wrong number of legs, was merely one of many monstrosities—occurring not only in children’s books, but more especially in children’s toys.

For example, every Knickerbocker boy in my boyish days had a Noah’s Ark which showed him all the animals carved from a series of exactly equal cubic blocks, and which taught him therefore that the mouse and the elephant were of precisely the same size!

Seven generations of American children (myself among them) were brought up to believe (from the old picture-books) that our ‘noble savage,’ the North American Indian, in his natural condition, had a small tree or shrub or bush growing gracefully out of the top of his head!

I remember a card-picture which used to be seen hanging on school-room walls, called ‘The Horn of Plenty’—a cornucopia filled with a pleasing variety of such fruits and flowers as were unknown in any earthly clime.

Robinson Crusoe’s island was always illustrated with impossible vegetables and preposterous vines!

Hardly any of our early American picture-books for the young gave true and natural delineations of birds—a heedlessness which was even then without excuse—for Audubon had already drawn and painted our feathered beauties to the very life!

It seems blasphemous to find fault with the venerated ‘New England Primer’—that blessed classic!—and yet even this sacred authority, in showing how

‘Zaccheus he
Did climb a tree,’—

supplied him with a tree not classifiable among any of the trees that Adam ever named.

The faith of children is early fixed, and hard to change. A false fact sticks fast in a child’s mind, like a crooked nail in a horse-shoe. I know an instance of such a false fact—an erroneous impression which will stubbornly keep its place in the brains of American children probably for many years to come. It concerns Cinderella. Now it is a wrong—a *very* wrong notion—that Cinderella’s slipper was of glass. How could she dance with a glass slipper? This bad blunder spoils the fine action of her flying feet. Cinderella’s slipper was not of glass; it was of *miniver* or *miniverre*; but as *verre* is the French word for glass, our early translators wrongly gave Cinderella a glass slipper—instead of a furry and fairy-like dancing-shoe of pure white ermine. But not an Act of Congress would now serve to correct this error. The nail is in, and it sticks!

Let me not be misunderstood.

Of course, I do not imply that a story for children should of necessity be true. On the contrary, the best specimens of such stories are fables and fancies—strange legends and wild inventions—like Sinbad the Sailor, Jack and the Bean-stalk, the Tortoise and the Hare. Nevertheless every tale or allegory for the young ought to be strictly true in one respect—namely, each bird and beast mentioned in it should act exactly according to his own true nature: thus the hungry fox should not be seen climbing a tree to get to his grapes, nor should the clucking hen be found diving into the water to teach her ducklings to swim.

A children’s literature—fanciful, poetical, and beautiful—but, at the same time, correctly based on a solid foundation of truth to nature—has grown up mainly within the present generation. Such a literature did not exist—at

*TOLL, ROLAND, TOLL!*¹

(Suggested by President Lincoln's First Call for Volunteers.)

I.

HIGH in the Belfry Tower—
 At the dead hour
 Of darkest night—
 The great bell Roland spoke;—
 And all who slept in Ghent awoke!
 What meant the thunder-stroke?
 Why trembled wife and maid—
 Frozen with fright?
 Why caught each man his blade?
 Why echoed every street
 With tramp of thronging feet,
 All flying to the City's wall?
 It was the warning call
 That Freedom stood in peril of a foe!
 And not alone the men of might
 Rushed forth to join the throng:
 Even the sick, though lying low,
 Sprang up, and begged to go:
 The weak grew in an instant strong—
 The timid, bold—
 Whenever Roland tolled,
 For every hand a sword could hold,
 And every arm could bend a bow!
 So acted men
 Like patriots then—
 Three hundred years ago!

least, it did not abound—when 'The Fly' was written. The trash and balderdash which 'The Fly' was meant to offset would not now be tolerated. An entirely different and more simple and natural style of writing for the young has been introduced and popularized in the United States by a busy corps of bright men and women who, for the most part, were not yet born when 'The Fly' was published. The splendid juvenile literature which these quick wits are now producing I regard as not only among the latest—but among the greatest—glories of the Republic. It is a full-blown literature which—forty years ago—was hardly yet in its bud;—a literature which now is so watchful and painstaking in reporting the facts of nature that no child's book to-day would dare to misnumber the legs of a spider;—a literature of which 'The Fly'—though a mere trifle—a wee thing of no importance in itself—yet nevertheless chanced to be (in a small way) a pioneer.

¹ The famous bell Roland of Ghent as Motley relates¹ was an object of great affection to the citizens, because it rang to arm them when Liberty was in danger.

II.

Toll, Roland, toll!
—Bell never yet was hung,
Between whose lips were swung
A grander Tongue!
If men be patriots still,
At thy first sound
True hearts will bound,
Great souls will thrill!
Then toll, and let thy test
Try every breast,
Till every loyal spirit stand confessed!

III.

Toll, Roland, toll!
—Not in thy Belfry Tower!
Not at the midnight hour!
Not from the River Scheldt to Zuyder Zee!
But here!—this side the sea!—
Toll here, in broad bright day!
For not by night awaits
A foe without the gates,
But perjured friends within betray,
Who do the deed at noon!
Toll, Roland, toll!
Thy sound is not too soon!
To arms! Ring out the Leader's call!
Toll, Roland, toll!
Till cottager from cottage-wall
Snatch pouch, and powder-horn, and gun—
The heritage of sire to son
Ere half of Freedom's work was done!—
Toll, Roland, toll!
Till swords from scabbards leap!
Toll, Roland, toll!
What tears can widows weep
Less bitter than when brave men fall?
Toll, Roland, toll!
In shadowed hut and hall
Shall lie the soldier's pall,
And hearts shall break while graves are filled!
Amen! So God hath willed!
And may His grace anoint us all!

IV.

Toll, Roland, toll!
—The Dragon on thy tower
Stands sentry to this hour;

And Freedom now is safe in Ghent;
 And merrier bells now ring;
 And in the land's serene content
 Men shout, 'God save the King!'—
 Until the skies are rent!
 Amen! so let it be!
 A kingly king is he
 Who keeps his people free!
 Toll, Roland, toll!
 Ring out across the sea!
 No longer They, but We
 Have now such need of thee!
 Toll, Roland, toll!
 Nor ever let thy throat
 Keep back its warning note
 Till Freedom's perils be outbraved!
 Toll, Roland, toll!—
 Till Freedom's flag, wherever waved,
 Shall shadow not a man enslaved!
 Toll, Roland, toll!—
 From Northern Lake to Southern strand!
 Toll, Roland, toll!
 Till friend and foe, at thy command,
 Shall clasp once more each other's hand,
 And shout, one-voiced, 'God save the land!'
 And love the land that God hath saved!
 Toll, Roland, toll!¹

BROOKLYN, April 16, 1861.

¹ This famous old bell bears the following Flemish inscription:
 'Myn naem is Roeland: als ick klippe, dan is't brand: als ick luyde, is't victorie in Vlaenderland.'

In French, this inscription is rendered thus:

'Mon nom est Roland: quand je tinte, c'est l'incendie: quand je sonne, il y a victoire en Flandre.'

In English, thus:

'My name is Roland: when I boom, there is fire: when I chime, there is victory in Flanders.'

The bell-tower contains, not only 'Roland,' but forty-four other and smaller bells;—so arranged that, on joyful occasions, they chime merrily—each bell helping the other.

The tower is called in Ghent the 'Beffroi'—a word which is usually Englished by the familiar word 'Belfry.' Nevertheless, perhaps 'Beffroi' is not 'Belfry.' Bædeker's notes sum up the etymological controversy as follows:

'There is no agreement' he says, 'as to the origin of the word "Beffroi." Some derive it from the German *bergfried* (propugnaculum); others decompose it into *bell*, a town-clock, and *fried*, peace. The word also might designate communal authority. Among the chief privileges which the Flemish cities demanded of their princes was a 'beffroi'—with a city-bell—to convoke the citizens, and also to give warning of the approach of an enemy.'

The gilded Dragon (referred to in stanza iv) was a prize captured by the Crusaders from the Mosque of St. Sophia, in Constantinople.

THE SAILOR'S WEDDING.

I.

'O LOITERING ship!' a sailor cried,
'Now speed me home to wed my bride!'
The ship, through flying spray,
Went bounding on her way.

II.

'O midnight-bells! my watch is done!
O happy morrow, haste thy sun!'
Then down he lay and slept,
And in his dream he wept.

III.

He dreamed that suddenly the waves
Stood fixt and green,—like churchyard graves!—
And that a requiem-bell
Ceased nevermore to knell!

IV.

'Land ho!' the deck-watch called, with cheers:
The sleeper wakened from his tears:
'O happy morn,' he said,
'This day shall I be wed!'

V.

But when at last he leapt ashore
And ran to Mary's cottage-door,—
And shouted Mary's name,—
No voice in answer came!

VI.

The neighbours, gathering at the sound,—
All stood in ominous silence round!
'But where, O where,' he cried,
'Where is my bonny bride?'

VII.

'Thy bonny bride,' then answered they,
'Awaits thee,—all in white array,—
With flowers upon her breast!—
In yonder grave at rest!'

THE BARD'S LISTENER.

I.

I STRUNG my lyre
With golden wire,
And sang a song of pure desire.
—A maiden heard,
Whose heart was stirred,
Until her bosom glowed with fire.

II.

'How can it be
That chaunt and glee
Have such a dangerous power?' quoth she.
My lyre, that day,
She stole away,—
And hid it under lock and key.

III.

'Why do you hide
My harp?' I cried.
'Because,' the blushing maid replied,
'I seek to know
Which thrilled me so,
The song or singer?'—and she sighed.

IV.

—The long day fled,
And back I sped
To ask, at eve, with hope and dread,—
'*Which* was it, pray?
The bard, or lay?'
—'I quite forgot you both!' she said.

RED, WHITE, AND BLUE.¹

I.

RED Cypress! Thee I pluck to-day.
All flowers have meaning, poets say.
The legend of thy leaf
Is death and grief;
Thou growest for the sake
Of hearts that break!
And since so many hearts have bled,
Thy star hath grown blood-red!
Thee on my breast I wear,
For now a heart bleeds there!

II.

White Rose! Why pluck I not the red?
The red rose is for love:
And love I not my dead?
What speaks the white rose of?
Of love in its despair!
This woe is mine to bear—
So I the white rose wear.

III.

Blue Harebell! Swing thyself in toll
For a departed soul!
Grief is thy other name;
Grief bendeth down thy head;
Grief boweth mine the same—
Grief for my dead!
But grief, most grieving, is most blest!
O heart of mine! beat not my breast—
God knoweth best!
So be at rest!

¹ Suggested by the patriotic rosettes which were commonly worn by citizens of the Northern States during the Civil War.

DÏS ALITER VISUM.

A FABLE FOR CRITICS.

I.

THE Gods, one morning, stooped to hear
 The noises of this lower sphere,
 And cried, 'O what a songful Earth!—
 Yet what, to us, can be the worth
 Of all these empty sounds that rise
 As mortal music to the skies?'

II.

A Lark trilled forth his roundelay,
 Just as an Ass began to bray.

III.

'Hush!' cried the bird, 'for, O thou brute,
 Thy pipe is such a wheezy flute
 That people say, who hear thy strain,
 Thou art be-addled in thy brain!'

IV.

The Ass,—though the reproach was keen,—
 Showed neither petulance nor spleen,
 But meekly answered, 'If my ear
 Can rightly judge of what I hear,
 I think thy voice, O dulcet bird,
 The sweetest that I ever heard!'

V.

This most magnanimous reply
 Was pleasing to the Gods on high,
 Who, when the Lark resumed his lay,
 Were heard,—for his reproof,—to say:
 'Think not thy haughty notes surpass
 The modest matins of the Ass!
 Thou singest well,—but all thy skill
 Is in thy quaver and thy trill:
 The music which the Gods love best,
 Is charity within the breast:
 A virtue which we rarely find,—
 In bird, or beast, or human kind!'

A LAYMAN'S CONFESSION OF FAITH.

AS other men have creeds, so I have mine :
—I keep the holy faith in God, in man,
And in the angels ministrant between.

—I hold to one true church of all true souls ;
Whose churchly seal is neither bread nor wine,
Nor laying on of hands, nor holy oil,
But only the anointing of God's grace.

—I hate all kings, and caste, and rank of birth :
For all the sons of men are sons of God :
Nor limps a beggar but is nobly born :
Nor wears a slave a yoke, nor czar a crown,
That makes him less or more than just a man.

—I love my country and her righteous cause :
So dare I not keep silent of her sin :
And after Freedom, may her bells ring Peace !

—I love one woman with a holy fire,
Whom I revere as priestess of my house :
I stand with wondering awe before my babes
Till they rebuke me to a nobler life :
I keep a faithful friendship with my friend,
Whom loyally I serve before myself :
I lock my lips too close to speak a lie :
I wash my hands too white to touch a bribe :
I owe no man a debt I cannot pay—
Except the love that men should always owe.

—Withal, each day, before the blessed Heaven
I open wide the chambers of my soul
And pray the Holy Ghost to enter in.

—Thus reads the fair confession of my faith,—
So crossed with contradictions by my life,
That now may God forgive the written lie !
Yet still, by help of Him Who helpeth men,
I face two worlds, and fear not life nor death !
O Father, lead me by Thy hand ! Amen.

1862.

KING OSWALD'S RIGHT HAND.

A LEGEND OF LINDISFARNE.

(Seventh Century A.D.)

I.

ONCE on a time, clad like a begging friar,
Bare-foot, and pricked by many a flint and brier,
The good King Oswald (Umbria's royal saint),
Returning from a pilgrimage, grew faint—
And being yet a league from Berwick town¹
Could walk no further, staggered, and fell down.

II.

The snowy-bearded King, despite his age,
Had no attendant but a youthful page—
To whom the royal Pilgrim, panting, said:
'Here on the highway I will lay my head,
Whilst thou shalt hie thee to the town and back,—
To bring a crust of bread, whereof the lack
Is like to famish me, and I shall die!'
(For he had fasted for the week gone by.)

III.

Forth skipped the well-fed page with leap and bound,
And Oswald fell asleep upon the ground.

IV.

A band of Berwick beggars passed the spot,
And spied the sleeping King, yet woke him not,
But camped around him on the shaded grass,
To wait until the noonday heat should pass.

V.

The page, returning, bore a silver dish,
Whereon, still smoking, lay a barbel-fish,
Fresh from the flood, and fresher from the fire—
As tempting as a monarch could desire.

VI.

The King awoke, and gloated on the sight,
Yet for a moment curbed his appetite,
Till for such bounty in a barren place
He first, ere tasting it, should say a grace.

¹ This pretty town, lying picturesquely at the mouth of the Tweed, is locally called Berrick.

VII.

The beggars, whilst the monarch's head was bowed,
Came tiptoe round him in a silent crowd :
Long was his prayer, yet breathlessly they stood,
Knowing the King beneath his monkish hood.

VIII.

The Royal Saint, when he had said his prayer,
Gazed at the gazers with a searching stare,
Until his pitying eyes could plainly see
That his gaunt guests were hungrier than he.

IX.

Then whispering to his page, King Oswald said,
'No mouthful shall I taste till *these* be fed :
Share thou with all alike what thou hast brought,
Counting thyself for one, but *me* for nought :
Divide to each a morsel of the fish,
Then break to pieces and divide the dish.'

X.

Loth was the lad to do the strange command :
Whereat King Oswald, with his own right hand,
Then gave to each of all the multitude
An equal portion of the savoury food,
Not keeping for himself a scrap or bone,
But feeding every mouth except his own.
And then the silver dish, with many a knock,
He dashed to pieces on a flinty rock,
And gave the beggars, to their strange delight,
Out of the precious metal each a mite.

XI.

When each had had his morsel of the fish,
And each his fragment of the silver dish,
Forth stepped the oldest beggar of the band,
And said with tears, seizing the King's right hand
(Which thrice he kissed ere letting go his hold),
'Oh never may this bounteous hand grow old !
But be it ever, though a thing of clay,
Exempt from death, corruption, and decay !'

XII.

Years afterward (for God is slow but sure,
And heareth all the cries of all His poor)
There came to pass (oh wondrous to declare !)
A strange fulfilment of the beggar's prayer.
The times grew evil, till the Holy Name
Of Christ the Lord was put to open shame :

The fierce King Penda and his Pagan host
 Laid waste with fire and sword the Umbrian coast.
 The good King Oswald, smitten through his helm,
 Hero and martyr, perished with his realm :
 His royal bones, unknown among the slain,
 Lay till they bleached upon the battle-plain.
 At last, the self-same Berwick beggar-band,
 Who once had eaten from King Oswald's hand,
 Espied his skeleton—a ghastly thing,
 And crossed themselves, and cried, 'It is the King!'

XIII.

The sign they knew it by was surer far
 Than the cleft skull that showed a battle scar ;
 For lo! the flesh from every bone had dropped
 Save from a hand whose pulse had never stopped!
 It was the King's Right Hand, still warm and white!
 And half the kingdom went to see the sight!—
 Proud of their Martyr, as a kingly soul
 Who lost a crown to gain an aureole.

XIV.

A tomb for ages marked his burial-place,
 And was a shrine for all the Umbrian race.
 But marble crumbles, granite wastes away,
 And urns and cromlechs tumble to decay :
 The tomb of Oswald fell so long ago,
 That where it stood no mortal now can know ;
 Yet all the world may evermore be sure
 That blest is every hand that feeds the poor¹.

¹ The story of King Oswald's right hand, as above given, is one of the ecclesiastical narratives which were penned at Jarrow in the eighth century by the Venerable Bede, who is called the 'father of English history.' The little stone church at Jarrow—containing the cell in which he wrote his voluminous works—still stands; charmingly situated among green meadows, near the sea. It is a quaint monument of early Saxon architecture; but, more than all, it is an object of reverential interest for its associations with a Christian hero who, in the affectionate regards of Englishmen ranks with Edward the Confessor and King Alfred the Great.

The Venerable Bede died at Jarrow, May 26, A. D. 735, aged 58 years.

King Oswald of Northumberland was slain by the troops of King Penda of Mercia, A. D. 642.

*GOD SAVE THE NATION.*A WAR HYMN.¹

I.

THOU Who ordainest, for the land's salvation,
 Famine, and fire, and sword, and lamentation,
 Now unto Thee we lift our supplication —
 O save the nation !

. II.

By the great sign, foretold of Thy appearing,
 Coming in clouds, while mortal men stand fearing,
 Show us—amid the smoke of battle, clearing,—
 Thy chariot nearing !

III.

By the brave blood that floweth like a river,
 Hurl Thou a thunderbolt from out Thy quiver !
 Break Thou the strong gates ! Every fetter shiver !
 Smite and deliver !

IV.

Slay Thou our foes, or turn them to derision !
 Then, in the blood-red Valley of Decision,
 Clothe Thou the fields, as in the prophet's vision,
 With peace Elysian !

1862.

THE FINMARK FAIRY²

OR THE GLOMMEN SPRITE.

I.

THE Fathers at Fall Saint Jason
 Have built in a shady nook
 A mill where a silent basin
 Is fed by a noisy brook.

The mill, in the driest season,
 Has never been known to fail,
 And all for the simple reason . . .
 But wait till you hear the tale.

¹ The metre is a re-echo of*Integer vilæ, scelerisque purus.*² Finmark is the northern part of the Scandinavian peninsula, and the Glommen is the chief river of Norway.

II.

The tale is an idle prattle,
Of how, to a poet's eye,
The clouds are a Herd of Cattle
That wander about the sky.

Their Drover is Odin's daughter—
A maiden of high degree,
A creature of air and water,
A sister of land and sea.

And being a hoyden airy,
And gadding by day and night,
Some call her the Finmark Fairy,
And others, the Glommen Sprite.

The Monks, in their pious chatter,
May christen her as they please;
Her name is of little matter,
Her soul is the Summer-breeze.

III.

The herd of this airy drover
Have neither a yoke nor bell;
They feed on the smell of clover,
They drink out of Meimir's Well¹.

And oft, to the peasant's wonder,
Who watches them from below,
They bellow and roar with thunder,
As over the hills they go.

The drover, in driving, dallies
To rest on a mountain-ridge,
Or loiter along the valleys,
Or linger at Heimdal's Bridge².

IV.

One morning the maid was fretful
At driving her cattle round,
And slept for a while—forgetful
To have them securely bound.

Away over hill and hollow,
The herd, being left untied,
Were spirited by Apollo,
With Mercury for his guide.

¹ Meimir's Well is the ocean.

² Heimdal's Bridge is the rainbow.

The cattle were slow of motion,
And seemed to be drowsy too,
And dreaming of grass in Goshen,
As cattle, when dozing, do.

v.

She woke, and she chid their straying;
But since they had strayed so far,
They now were beyond obeying,
And deaf as the morning star.

So flinging a rope around them
(The air being very still¹,
And dragging them down, she drowned them
In front of Saint Jason's mill.

She fettered their ghosts and gyved them,
And bound them as still as death,
And suddenly she revived them,
And loosened them with her breath.

vi.

She tethers them at her pleasure;
They tug, but they tug in vain;
Her rope is of endless measure,
Like Jupiter's golden chain¹.

So slender a cord or cable
Has never been spun or set,
Except in the ancient fable
Of Venus in Vulcan's net².

vii.

At times, in the finest weather,
Her cattle are far away,
And cannot be pulled together—
And so they are left to stray.

The Fairy is sure to find them,
And then to the mill and weir
She brings them agen to bind them,
As soon as the pond is clear.

¹ This was the chain by which Jupiter could draw all the worlds up to himself, though not all the worlds combined could draw him down.

² Vulcan, who was jealous of the coquetries of Venus with Mars, wove an invisible net in which he cunningly entangled the two lovers, and thereby brought upon them the laughter of all the Gods.

VIII.

The water, if clear, is soundless,
For as to its depth, you know,
The bottom of course is boundless—
A firmament lies below.

The edge of the pool is grassy,
And bordered with maple-trees;
And under the surface glassy
Are maples to match with these.

If ever the glass be shattered
By leap of a lively trout,
The cattle at once are scattered,
And tremble and hurry out.

IX.

The Fathers are fond of coming
To sit where the mill-wheel grinds,
For always a mill-wheel's humming
Is soothing to lazy minds.

They come at the hour of matin,
They come at the vespertide,—
All bringing their books of Latin,
But flinging them here aside.

The Fathers are fat and frowsy,
And Latin, they find, is dull;
And few of them care, when drowsy,
To study and pore and mull.

But each with his sacred sandal,
And each with his pious mind,
Is keen for the latest scandal,
Or joke of a doubtful kind.

They sit with their legs extended;
They gossip of Youth and Love;
They wish that the Earth were ended—
And sigh for the World above.

Though down in the water plainly
They notice the cattle white,
They ogle the maiden vainly,
Who never appears in sight.

For never shall they behold her,—
 This virgin of viewless air!—
 And how could a maid be colder,
 Or more to a monk's despair?

x.

They gabble of Odin's daughter,
 And learnedly they explain,
 That drought is a lack of water,
 And follows a lack of rain.

The mill, in the driest season,
 Keeps running without a drop,
 Because (as the Fathers reason)
 It never has time to stop.

This reason is quite too clever,
 And proves that the running mill
 Not only must run for ever,
 But very much longer still.

xi.

Now peace to the drove and drover,
 And plenty to hill and dale!
 —The ballad at last is over;
 And how do you like the tale?

—••—

ASTRAY.

I TRAVELLED a forbidden road,
 Which first appeared so flowery fair
 That onward eagerly I strode
 Till,—to my horror and despair!—
 All buds and blossoms, blooming there,
 All tender boughs and twigs of green,
 Stood changed to burrs and nettles keen,—
 Whose angry points my garments tore,
 And pricked my hands till they were sore.
 Bewildered at the wondrous change,
 (That should have warned me from the place,)
 I kept my course with swifter pace,
 And saw a marvel still more strange;
 For cruel flints sprang through the ground
 To meet my feet at every bound,—
 With gash on gash that made them bleed:
 A punishment so sharp indeed
 That panting—gasping—terrified—
 I turned about and looked around

In hope of finding, in my need,
 Some pilgrim who could be my guide.
 Then, in a moment, at my side,
 There stood a Spirit, winged and crowned,
 Whose face, although it shone, yet frowned.

'And who art *thou*?' I trembling cried.

'Give ear,' said he, 'to what I say:
 I am the guide of all who stray:—
 I point them back to virtue's path:
 Thou wendest a forbidden way:
 So in advance of thee I go,
 And, step by step,—in love, not wrath,—
 These angry flints and briers I strow
 To sting thy feet in wandering so!'

I knelt and kissed his garment's hem,
 And cried, 'O Angel, sent from Heaven,
 Make sharper yet each thorny stem!
 Increase the flints to seven times seven!
 Pierce me and tear me till I bleed!
 Give me whatever hurts I need!
 Fulfil thy purpose in my pain—
 I will endure and not complain!'

He fled!—and I, with deep remorse,
 Turned back from my forbidden course:
 —And oh, that ever at my side
 Might go this Angel as a guide!
 —But now he comes to me no more,
 And I go straying as before.

THE FORLORN HOPE.

I.

OUT of twenty in the fight,
 That morn,—
 To their burial ten, that night,
 Were borne;
 And their faces, toward the moon,
 Looked pale;—
 And the night-wind murmured forth
 Its wail!
 'We are beaten—we are flying—
 We are wounded—we are dying—
 Yet we cannot leave them lying,
 With no word of blessing said!'

So, the soldiers all complying,
Then the sergeant bared his head,
And he read the holy service
For the burial of the dead.

II.

'Is there any other prayer
 To pray?
Is there any other word
 To say?
Is there any other sod
 To bring?
Is there any other flower
 To fling?
We must do it now or never!
Not a minute can we stay!
We must scatter—and endeavour
Each to flee a separate way!
Since the dead are safe for ever,
Save yourselves, if so ye may!'
—And they left their buried comrade,
And escaped ere break of day.

A WOMAN'S LETTER.

MY Friend (mark, only *friend*, and nothing more!)
To-night, in parting from you at the door,
I meant to speak what now I haste to write.

You saw me stand awaiting your good-night;
You asked me for my lips,—I answered nay;
You then let fall my hand, and fled away.

The *rose* you gave me—will it not decay?
And oh! is *love* a gift that long endures?
I had a whilom lover—one who came
And gave his heart ere yet you offered yours:
If *he* was fickle—*all* men are the same—
You too! If this be harsh, am *I* to blame?
Are bitter things that go by some sweet name
Less bitter? Love is but a sweet-named gall.

A heart can never trust until it knows;
A heart can never know until it trusts;
A heart is never safe that loves at all.

Love is the pain of pains, the woe of woes :
 Let women's bosoms turn to marble busts—
 And thence to adamant—and so remain—
 Nor ever soften into tears and pain !
 You have a *right* to know ; so be it known—
 I have no other heart than just a stone !

I have not said that *every* man deceives ;
 Nor do I say—*no* woman's heart hath burned,
 Like mine, with love, and found the love returned :
 I only know the lesson I have learned !
 Since then, I have not loved ; I love not now ;
 I shall not love agen ! Not any vow
 Which any man can make not yours to-day—
 Not were it crowned with all the buds of May—
 Would change this final answer, which is Nay !

P. S.—If you are hurt by what I write,
 Tear up my letter ! Come to-morrow night.

—••—

ST. PHILIP NÉRI'S LITANY.

'And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head.'
 ST. JOHN XIX. 2.

I.

O THOU whose bloody brow
 Once shed its drops for *me*,
 Is there no stab or wound which now
 I may endure for *Thee* ?—

II.

Or having named Thy name,
 Have I no cross to take ?—
 Or is there left for me no shame
 To suffer for Thy sake ?

III.

Unscourged of any whip,
 Unpierced of any sting,
 How shall I prove my fellowship
 With Thy fierce suffering ?

IV.

Yet Thy dread sacrifice
Sowhelms me with its woe,
That all the fountains of mine eyes
Well up and overflow.

V.

The spear that pierced Thy side
Gave wounds to more than Thee,—
For in my soul, O Crucified,
Thy cross is laid on *me*!

VI.

And as Thy rocky tomb
Was in a garden fair
Where all around stood flowers in bloom,
To sweeten all the air,—

VII.

So in my heart of stone
I sepulchre Thy death,
While thoughts of Thee, like roses blown,
Are sweet as Heaven's own breath.

VIII.

Where I entomb Thee, stay!—
Hid at my bosom's core!—
Nor let an angel roll away
The stone before the door!

IX.

Arise not, O my dead,
As He whom Mary sought,
(And found an empty mound instead,—
Her spices all for nought,—)

X.

O Lord, not so depart
From my enshrining breast,
But lie anointed in a heart
That by Thy death is blest!

XI.

Or if Thou shalt arise,
Quit not my heart, Thy grave,
But bear it with Thee to the skies—
A soul that Thou shalt save!

THE TWO HUNGRY KITTENS.¹

I.

TWO Kittens grew hungry with licking their feet,
And ran around snooping for something to eat.

II.

'Me-ow!' said the Curly-tail, 'milk would be nice.'
'Ska-fitch!' cried the Smutty-nose, 'I shall eat mice!'

III.

The house of the mice was a hole in the floor,
Too small for the kits to get in at the door.

IV.

So down in a corner they silently sat,
And waited awhile for the mice to grow fat.

V.

'Who comes?' cried a beautiful mouse, at her cheese.
The kittens replied, 'We are rats, if you please.'

VI.

'Not rats!' said the nibbler, 'your paws are not pink,
Your eyes are too big, and your tails have a kink.'

VII.

'Come out,' quoth the kits, 'and our tails and our eyes
Will then look exactly the natural size!—

VIII.

'Sweet mouse, we invite you to go to the fair,
And you shall have plenty of combs in your hair.'

IX.

Said mousie, 'Excuse me, for I am engaged!'
At which the two kittens were fiercely enraged.

X.

They flew at the mouse-hole, they awfully squalled,
They fought one another, they tumbled, they sprawled,

XI.

They twisted their whiskers, they tangled their tails—
Till down came the dairymaid bringing her pails!

¹ This was written to be recited at a picnic of young children.

XII.

A pail in each hand ! And her hands they were two
And so were her pails, and the milk it was new,—

XIII.

The curd it was white, and the cream it was thin,—
And both the two kittens they each tumbled in !—

XIV.

And *scat!* cried the maid with a terrible shout,
And both the two kittens they each tumbled out !

XV.

The mice and the kittens no longer are friends,
Which every one knows, so the story here ends !

THE STRANGE PREACHER OF PADUA.

A PADUAN Carmelite lay deathly sick,
And cried, 'O God, if I should die to-day
(Who thought to preach to-morrow), choose Thee out,
To fill my place, a worthier monk than I ;
But let him be no Paduan ; send instead
A voice unknown ; that when the people hear
A stranger in my pulpit, they perchance
Will pay to *him* a greater heed than they
Have paid to *me*, whom they have heard too much,
Heeding too little ! Great will be the throng :
So lend him for his task a tongue of fire,
And measure to him for his morning hour
The grace of Heaven to snatch the town from Hell !'

Next day at matins, while a thousand eyes
In the dim light of San Antonio's church
Were gazing at the shaft of fluted stone
To which (as when a swallow builds her nest
Against a beam) the pulpit clung, uprose
A monk—a stranger to them all—who crossed
Himself and said, 'The preacher whom you love,
And whom you hither crowd in hope to hear,
Shall speak to you no more on earth—for hence,
This very morn, at cockcrow, he was called
By a celestial summons, and hath left
His corpse behind him in his mouldy cell,
And upward mounted to his crown in Heaven !
Be warned, O Paduans, turn and flee from Hell !

Beginning thus, the stranger then went on,
And preached an unctuous sermon to the flock,
Who craned their necks to listen, yet who paled
At hearing; for the preacher, as he passed
From point to point, paused for a moment at
Each damning point, to thunder the refrain—
'Be warned, O Paduans, turn and flee from Hell!'

And thus—as with a tongue of fire indeed!—
He stung their cheeks to scarlet, like their sins.

In anguish for their souls, some knelt and prayed;
Some uttered groans; some shivered, as with frost;
Each sinner felt an earthquake in his breast;
And when the stranger finished his discourse,
The choir were thick of throat—too choked to sing;
The organ blew no breath through any pipe—
The player's hands could only prop his brows!

Then stept the silent people from the church,
As mourners mutely scatter from a tomb;
Or, if they whispered, it was but to say—
'Oh when has this thrice-wicked city heard
Such preaching since Savonaróla's day!'

Down from his pulpit, with his frock still on,
And with his triumph sparkling in his eyes,
The stranger (with some monks of Carmel, whom
He chose for comrades) sauntered out beyond
The city's gate—their bare feet in the grass,
Their bare heads shaded by the orange-trees,
Their voices answering to the lark's with song.

Then happened a thing strange—for when, oh when,
In this strange world, will signs and wonders cease?

Now close behind the preacher and his dupes,
There followed barefoot, staggering, panting, pale,
Scarce half alive, the priest they left for dead!—
Who, having learned the marvel of the morn,
Sprang out of bed, pursued the stranger, spied
A cloven-foot beneath his gown, and cried
With a shrill voice that hushed their happy hymns,
'Ye fools, I swear to you by Heaven above,
This preacher is the Devil from below!'

White as their scapulars, the Carmelites
Stood all aghast! And first they fixt their eyes

On the accuser, then on the accused—
Two shapes as if of mortal men, and yet
One risen out of Death, one out of Hell!

With mildewed spots and warts the preacher's face
Turned all at once a toad's—and then agen
A monk's—and thus with loathsome interchange
Now seemed the one, and now the other, till—
In righteous wrath—the sick and fevered friar
Cried out, 'O enemy of God and man,
Before I strike thee with this Crucifix,
And hurl thee to the limbo of the damned,—
First tell us why thou warnest men to flee
From Hell, since thou art keen to lure them in?'

The Devil quailed! He dreaded to disclose
The chief and subtlest secret of his art!
But being stricken with the Holy Rood
(The punishment that makes him cringe the most!)
He said, 'I warn men of their sins that when,—
Once warned,—they sin agen (as straight they do)
Their double guilt shall bring them double doom;
For at the Judgement I shall say, "O Judge,
The souls that charged their fall to trick of mine
Speak shameless lies!—for, tempting not, I warned;
And, snaring not, I pointed out the snare;
And, seeing them upon the burning brink,
With tears I bade them back, yet down they plunged!
Condemn them now to me, and to the flame!"'

So saying, as a diver cleaves the sea,
He, diving, cleft the earth, and sank to Hell!

With arms uplifted toward the city's walls,
'O Paduans,' cried the sick and pallid friar—
With hardly breath to speak—'what tears mine eyes
Have wasted, weeping for your souls not saved!'

Uprose he then sublime of stature, clenched
His hands, gave up the ghost, and fell!—a corpse indeed!

All Padua, when it heard the tale, stood dumb!
No man but vowed to live a whiter life!
O fickle human heart! How oft its brittle vows
Are dashed to pieces on its stony self!
The people had repented,—and what then?
Why, then they sinned afresh! The Devil went
Not back to San Antonio's church! No need!
For San Antonio's church went back to him!

THE VICTORY OF LIFE.

I.

I ONCE made search in hope to find
Abiding peace of mind.

II.

I toiled for riches—as if these
Could give the spirit ease !

III.

I turned aside to books and lore—
Still baffled as before.

IV.

I tasted then of love and fame—
But hungered still the same.

V.

I chose the sweetest paths I knew,
Where only roses grew.

VI.

—Then fell a voice from out the skies
With warning in this wise :

VII.

‘O my disciple, is it meet
That roses tempt thy feet ?

VIII.

‘Thy Master, even for His head,
Had only thorns instead !’

IX.

—Then, drawn as by a heavenly grace,
I left the flowery place,

X.

And walked on cutting flints and stones,
And said with tears and groans :

XI.

'O Lord, my feet—where Thou dost lead—
Shall follow though they bleed !'

XII.

—As then I saw He chose my path
For discipline, not wrath,—

XIII.

I walked in weakness till at length
I suffered unto strength.

XIV.

—Yet never were my trials done,
But only new-begun.

XV.

For when I learned to cast disdain
Upon some special pain,—

XVI.

He gave me sharper strokes to bear,
And pierced me to despair ;—

XVII.

Until, so sorely was I pressed,
I broke beneath the test,—

XVIII.

And fell within the Tempter's power ;—
But, in the evil hour,

XIX.

Bound hand and foot, I cried, 'O Lord !
Break Thou the three-fold cord !'

XX.

And while my soul was at her prayer,
He snatched me from the snare.

XXI.

—I then drew nigh the gate of death,
Where, struggling for my breath,

XXII.

I shook my coward knees in fear,
Aghast to stand so near.

XXIII.

Yet while I shivered in the gloom,
Down-gazing in the tomb,—

XXIV.

'O Lord,' I cried, 'bear Thou my sin,
And I will enter in !'

XXV.

—But He by Whom my soul was tried
Not yet was satisfied ;

XXVI.

For then He crushed me with a blow
Of more than mortal woe,—

XXVII.

Till bitter death had been relief
To my more bitter grief.

XXVIII.

Yet bleeding, panting, in the dust,
I knew His judgement just ;—

XXIX.

And since a lark with broken wing
Sometimes has heart to sing,—

XXX.

So I, all shattered, still could raise
To His dear Name the praise !

XXXI.

—Henceforth I know a holy prayer
To conquer pain and care :

XXXII.

For when my struggling flesh grows faint,
And murmurs with complaint,—

XXXIII.

My spirit cries, '*Thy will be done !*'—
And finds the victory won.

THE CAPTAIN'S WIFE.

[A Woman speaks.]

I.

WE gathered roses, Blanche and I, for
little Madge one morning.
'Like every soldier's wife,' said Blanche,
'I dread a soldier's fate.'
Her voice a little trembled then, as if
at some forewarning.
—A soldier galloped up the lane, and
halted at the gate.

II.

'Which house is Malcolm Blake's?' he cried,—
'a letter for his sister!'
And when I thanked him, Blanche inquired,
'But none for *me*, his wife?'
The soldier played with Madge's curls, and
told her as he kissed her,
'Your father was my Captain, child!—I
loved him as my life!'

III.

Then suddenly he galloped off, and
left the rest unspoken.
I burst the seal, and Blanche inquired,
'What makes you tremble so?'
What answer did I dare to make? How
should the news be broken?
I could not shield her from the stroke, yet
tried to ease the blow.

IV.

'A battle in the swamps,' I said; 'our
men were brave but lost it.'
And pausing there, 'The note,' said I,
'is not in Malcolm's hand.'
And first a flush flamed through her face, and
then a shadow crossed it.
'Read quick, dear May!—read all, I pray,
and let me understand.'

V.

I did not read it as it stood, but
tempered so the phrases
As not at first to hint the worst,—kept
back the fatal word,

And half retold his gallant charge, his
 shout, his comrades' praises,—
 Till, like a statue carved in stone, she
 neither spoke nor stirred!

VI.

O never yet a woman's heart was frozen
 so completely!—
 So unbaptized with helping tears!—so
 passionless and dumb!
 Spell-bound she stood till little Madge
 ran up and asked her sweetly,
 'Dear mother, is the battle done? and will
 my father come?'

VII.

I laid my hand on Madge's lips, and led her
 to her playing.
 Poor Blanche! the winter on her cheek was snowy
 like her name!
 What could she do but kneel and pray, and
 linger at her praying?
 O Christ, when other heroes die, moan
 other wives the same?

VIII.

Must other women's hearts yet break, to keep
 the Cause from failing?
 God pity our brave lovers then, who face
 the battle's blaze!
 And pity wives in widowhood!—But is it
 unavailing?
 O Lord, give Freedom first, then Peace!—and
 unto Thee be praise!

1862.

FRIENDSHIP.

TO ———.

O TRUE and noble friend!—(too far away:
 Thou on the prairie—I beside the sea)—
 The spring, that should be here, makes long delay
 And not a flower is open to the bee.

Meanwhile, from thee, the west wind comes to say
 That thou art walking where the fields are fair,
 And nests are in the boughs that late were bare.

Thou hast the early season—I, the late.

For *thee*, the blossoms of the orchard blow:
On *me*, the sea-gulls and the fog-wreaths wait.

But shall the leagues between us loose the band
That bound us closer than we knew, or know?

I ask myself, shall we, who months ago—
Through frosty days, and in a frozen land—
Built up a friendship on the winter's snow—
Behold it melt and vanish in the spring?

False friendship was it, if it perish so!—
True friendship is an everlasting thing!

There runs a record that not only saith,
He 'loved His own,' but 'loved them to the end.'

So evermore a man shall love his friend—
With friendship that outliveth life and death!



CROSS AND CRESCENT.

I.

'DOWN with the infidel abhorred!
Up with the banner of the Lord!
So the Crusaders sang,
As into Palestine they poured,—
While with defiant clash and clang
Their swords and bucklers rang.

II.

'Death to the Christian dogs,' replied
The scornful Moslems, in their pride;
'Let Allah's host advance!'
Then, in the sunshine,—far and wide,—
Like summer-lightning was the glance
Of scimitar and lance.

III.

Fair Heaven on both their armies smiled,
And wished the foemen reconciled;
But in their pious rage
Each by the other was reviled,—
Till now, in wrath from age to age,
Eternal war they wage.

IV.

How can the sacred discord end?
 How can the Cross and Crescent blend?
 How can the trumpet cease
 That calls their pennons to contend?
 O Crescent, wane! O Cross, increase!
 From Truth alone comes Peace!

V.

The whole Creation groans with pain
 Till He Whose right it is shall reign!
 When shall His reign begin?
 When shall the chariots quit the plain?
 O Cross, above the battle's din
 Thy peaceful triumph win!

VI.

Fulfil thy word, O Holy Book!
 O spear, be thou a pruning-hook!
 O sword, be thou a plow!
 O Child, come to the meadow-brook
 And in fulfilment of thy vow
 Lead lamb and lion *now*!

 THE TWO LADDERS.

BENIGHTED in my pilgrimage,—alone,—
 And footsore—(for the path to Heaven grew steep)—
 I looked for Jacob's pillow of a stone,
 In hope of Jacob's vision in my sleep!
 Then, in my dream, whereof I quake to tell,—
 Not up from Earth to Heaven, but oh, sad sight!
 The ladder was let down from Earth to Hell!—
 Whereon, ascending from the deep abyss,
 Came fiery spirits who, with dismal hiss,
 Made woful clamour of their lost delight,
 And stung my eyelids open—till, in fright,
 I caught my staff, and at the dead of night
 I who toward Heaven and Peace had halted so,
 Was fleet of foot to flee from Hell and Woe!

PYRRHA.

(A Paraphrase from the Latin of Horace.)

WHAT youth, with roses round his brow,
And sweetly-scented drops bedewed,
Makes love to thee, O Pyrrha, now,
Within thy shady solitude?

What victim is it to ensnare
That thou dost bind thy yellow hair
In braids so simple yet so fair?

The fool, whoever he may be,
Who sets his silly heart on thee
Shall find that never wooer wooed
A maid of such a fickle mood!

For thou art changeful as the skies:
At first he sees them azure-hued,
But then, before he is aware,
The elements are all at feud;
A tempest suddenly is brewed;
And thunder hurtles through the air!—
While he, fond wretch, stands shivering there,—
His hope storm-pelted and subdued,
And nothing left him but despair!

O luckless is the love-sick wight
Who trusts the troth which thou dost plight,
And whom thou flatterest to delude!

No sooner hath he knelt and sued,
And found thee gentle for a day,
Than he goes credulous away—
Till, with the next returning morn,
He hies him back to find thee rude,
And full of woman's wrath and scorn,
Capricious as when Capricorn
Roars through his stormiest latitude!

I too have seen thy lightnings flash!
I too have heard thy thunders crash!
I too have felt thy wild waves dash!

But I (more blest by fate than he!)
Though badly drenched in that deep sea,
Came safe (yet dripping) from the main,—
To hang in Neptune's sacred fane
My votive-offering on the wall,—
With thanks that I escaped it all!

THE FLIGHT FROM THE CONVENT.

I.

I SEE the starlights quiver,
Like jewels in the river:
The bank is hid with sedge:
—What if I slip the edge?
I thought I knew the way
By night as well as day:
—But how a lover goes astray!

II.

The place is somewhat lonely—
I mean for just one only!
I brought the boat ashore
An hour ago or more:
Well, I will sit and wait:
She fixt the hour at eight:
—Good angels! bring her not too late!

III.

To-morrow's tongues that name her
Will hardly dare to blame her:
A lily still is white
Through all the dark of night:
The morning sun shall show
A bride as pure as snow—
Whose wedding all the world shall know.

IV.

O God! that I should gain her!
But what can so detain her?
Hist, yelping cur! thy bark
Will fright her in the dark.
What? striking nine? that's fast!
Is some one walking past?
—Oho! so thou art come at last!

V.

But why thy long delaying?
Alack! thy beads and praying!
If thou, a saint, dost hope
To kneel and kiss the Pope.
Then I, a sinner, know
Where sweeter kisses grow—
Nay, now, just once before we go!

VI.

Nay, twice, and by Saint Peter
 The second was the sweeter!
 Quick now, and in the boat!
 Good-bye, old tower and moat!
 May mildew from the sky
 Drop blindness on the eye
 That lurks to watch our going by!

VII.

O saintly maid! I told thee
 No convent-walls could hold thee!
 Look! yonder comes the moon!
 We started none too soon!
 See how we pass that mill!
 What! is the night too chill?
 —Then I must fold thee closer still!

*THE TRUE CHURCH.*

I.

I WANDERED on a Sabbath day,
 And met a Pilgrim on my way.

Quoth I, 'Oh aid me in my search—
 I seek to find the One True Church.'

Quoth he, 'Go search the world around—
 The One True Church is never found:

'But yonder, with an ivied wall,
 Behold the falsest church of all!—

'For look! what image do you see?
 A ghastly Christ upon His Tree!—

'How can the Lord be truly shown
 In painted wood or carven stone?'

Then fearing he had told me wrong,
 Quoth I, 'Behold the gathering throng!'

He answered, 'If a church be true,
 It hath not many, but a few.'

'But see,' said I, 'they humbly bow,
 And cross themselves on breast and brow.'

'A cross so light to bear,' he cried,
'Is not of Christ the Crucified.'

We entered, and with holy awe
I gazed about me, and I saw

Faint candles by the daylight dimmed,
As if by foolish virgins trimmed ;

Fair statues of the saints of old,
Each haloed with a ring of gold ;

Stained windows, casting down a beam
Like Jacob's ladder in the Dream.

The Pilgrim gazed from floor to roof,
And frowned, and uttered this reproof :

'God's temple—not in all the lands—
Hath ever once been built with hands !'

II.

Then faring forth, while yet the dew
Flashed from our feet in trailing through,

We came upon a church whose dome
Upheld a cross, but not for Rome.

No candle-lights were burning there,
No smell of incense filled the air.

Nor did we enter as before,
But peeped within the open door.

The solemn service in the fane
Appeared to give the Pilgrim pain.

'Do prayers,' he asked, 'the more avail
If offered at an altar-rail ?

'Does water sprinkled from a bowl
Wash any sin from any soul ?

'Or can the bread and wine, forsooth,
Help any tongue to tell the truth ?'

Just then, upon a maple spray,
Two orioles perched and piped a lay,—

Until the gold beneath their throats
Shook molten in their mellow notes.

Resounding from the church a psalm
Rolled, quivering, through the outer calm.

'Both choirs,' said I, 'are in accord,
For both give praises to the Lord.'

'The birds,' he answered, 'chant a song
Without a note of sin or wrong :

'The church's anthem is a strain
Of human guilt and mortal pain.'

The orioles and the organ ceased,
And in the pulpit rose the priest.

The Pilgrim whispered in my ear,
'It profits not to tarry here.'

'He speaks no error,' answered I ;
'He teaches that the living die ;

'The dead arise ; and both are true ;
Both wholesome doctrines ; neither new.'

The Pilgrim said, 'He strikes a blow
At wrongs of ages long ago,

'But covers with a shielding phrase
The living sins of present days !

'Now curséd be the lips that speak
To spare the strong, yet smite the weak !'

III.

We turned away among the tombs—
A tangled place of briers and blooms.

I spelt the legends on the stones :
It was a place where lay the bones

Of bodies which the rack once brake
In witness for the dear Lord's sake,—

Of ashes gathered from the pyres
Of saints whose souls fled up through fires.

Quoth I, 'What trials—long and sore—
These early witness-bearers bore !'

Said he, 'But every Church in turn
Hath made some martyr bleed or burn !—

'Were Christ on earth, He now would see
No Christian Churches that agree !'

IV.

We came where poplars, gaunt and tall,
Let twice their length of shadow fall.

Uprose a meeting-house in view,
Of bleached and weather-beaten hue.

Men plain of garb and pure of heart
Divided church and world apart.

Nor did they vex the silent air
With any sound of hymn or prayer.

God's finger to their lips they pressed,
Till each man kissed it, and was blest.

I asked, 'Is *this* the True Church, then?'
He answered, 'Nay, a sect of men:

'And sects, that bar their doors in pride,
Shut God and half His saints outside.

'The gates of Heaven, the Scriptures say,
Stand open wide by night and day!

'Those everlasting doors are free—
Not opened with a church's key!'

V.

Then far from every church we strayed—
Save Nature's pillared aisles of shade.

The squirrels ran to see us pass,
And God's sweet breath was on the grass.

I challenged all the creeds, and sought
What truth, or lie, or both, they taught.

I asked, 'Had Augustine a fault?'
The Pilgrim gazed at Heaven's high vault,

And answered, 'Can a mortal eye
Contain the sphere of all the sky?'

I said, 'The circle is too wide!'
'God's truth is wider!' he replied,—

'So Augustine caught but a ray
Of all the bright and boundless day:

'So Luther, with his burning heart,
Beheld the glory but in part:

'So Calvin, with his narrow soul,
Could never comprehend the whole :

'Not Luther, Calvin, Augustine,
Saw visions such as *I* have seen !'

While yet he spake I felt a flame
Go shooting through my quivering frame !

I looked upon his holy brow,
Entreating, 'Tell me, who art THOU ?'—

But such a splendour filled the place
I knew it was the Lord's own face !

I was a sinner, and afraid !
I knelt in dust, and thus I prayed :

'O Christ the Lord, end Thou my search,
And lead me to the One True Church !'

He answered (not as man may speak)—
'The One True Church thou shalt not seek :

'Seek thou for evermore instead
To find the One True Christ, its Head !'

The Lord then vanished from my sight,
And left me standing in the light.

SHIPWRECK OF THE HEART.

A LOVER'S bosom is a billowy deep,
Whereon the breath of doubt, the gust of pride,
The storm of tears so often rudely sweep
That halcyon peace doth seldom there abide ;
For suddenly the purple sails, spread wide,
Of shallows laden with the heart's whole gain
Are struck of tempest in the middle main,
And silver masts are split, and silken ropes
Are sundered,—yea, and many an anchor-chain,
Deemed adamant, is snapped,—until, at last,
Down fathomless go freights of foundering hopes,
All sunk in dismal caverns, deep and vast :
From whence perpetual waifs come drifting back
As mouldy memories of the mighty wrack.

FLUTE AND LUTE.

I.

A LOVER, with flute,
 And a lady, with lute,
 Sat playing in discord together ;
 And the wind rose high
 In the cloudy sky,
 And winterish was the weather !

II.

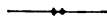
'If it be love' (sang she),
 'If it be love,
 Tell me, Is thine
 Equal to mine ?
 —Give me some sign,
 If it be love.'

III.

'If it be love' (piped he),
 If it be love,
 Keep it at rest
 Deep in thy breast,
 —Asking no test,
 If it be love.'

IV.

Then, sweeter than lute,
 And softer than flute,
 Their lips came close together ;
 And the clouds rolled by,
 And blue was the sky,
 And sunshiny was the weather !

*THE PARSON'S COURTSHIP.*

Cotasket Parish, A.D. 1695.

I.

OLD Parson Preble on his mare,
 And with his wig askew behind,
 Rode slowly—with the haggard air
 Of one who had a troubled mind.

II.

The hour was just at set of sun—
When (in the ancient Yankee way)
The Sabbath, with its rest, was done—
And men might work, and children play.

III.

The Parson, who had preached that morn,
Had now a worldly task to do—
Which all alone, and all forlorn,
He solemnly must carry through.

IV.

Dismounting at the graveyard gate,
He entered, and sat down in tears
Beside a moss-grown slab of slate
Where lay his wife of other years.

V.

This dame, upon her dying bed—
Among the last commands she gave—
Forbade her spouse, when she was dead,
To wed agen, above her grave.

VI.

He longed to make a second choice;
For every Sunday, in the choir,
He heard the widow Cheney's voice
Until she grew his heart's desire.

VII.

And though his flame was unconfessed,
Yet all the while it glowed and burned,—
Which never once the widow guessed,
Or quickly it had been returned.

VIII.

Beside the grave he lingered long,
And mused upon his lonely life—
Debating if a man be wrong
In wishing for a second wife.

IX.

And when the bats began to flit,
And when below him, in the town,
A candle here and there was lit—
He started off, and cantered down.

X.

The mare—whom lustily he switched—
Made lively speed along the road,
And never halted until hitched
At Widow Cheney's white abode.

XI.

The dame was busy sifting flour,
Nor heard the comer till he said,
'Be praise to that Almighty Power
Who giveth man his daily bread!'

XII.

The widow—(caught by such a guest
In just her linsey-woolsey gown,
For she had doffed her Sunday best)—
Dropt bashfully her eyelids down.

XIII.

Outspake her suitor to her face,
'I have a solemn word to say,
Whereto is need of heavenly grace,
So, Widow Cheney, let us pray!'

XIV.

Devoutly did the couple kneel—
The suitor at the rocking-chair,
The widow at the spinning-wheel—
And simple was the parson's prayer:

XV.

He mourned for uncommitted sin,
Implored a grace on all mankind,
And pled that love might enter in
And sweetly move the widow's mind.

XVI.

Uprising from his prayerful knees,
'I seek a wife,' the parson said,
'And finding thee, if God shall please—
And thou be willing—we will wed!'

XVII.

The widow started with surprise
(For women old are women still)
And answered, lifting up her eyes,
'I seek to do the heavenly will.'

XVIII.

The heavenly will was plain indeed,
And pointed to the flowery yoke,—
For love is hardly less the need
Of elder than of younger folk.

XIX.

While autumn flowers were yet in bloom,
The people came from far and near—
To wish the joy of bride and groom,
And eat and drink the wedding-cheer.

XX.

And then beside the bridal-bed,
The bride, in a mysterious tone,
Spake softly to the groom, and said,
'I have a secret to make known:

XXI.

'The years are twelve, this very day,
Since she whose title now is mine,
The night before she passed away,
Bequeathed to me this written line:

XXII.

“To thee, O friend of all my life,
I say, before my strength be spent,
That should he wed another wife—
If *thou* art she, I rest content.”

XXIII.

He gazed upon the well-known hand,
Thought backward of the bygone years,
Thought forward of the heavenly land,
And answered not a word for tears.

XXIV.

And, as the chronicles relate,
His wig went nevermore askew,—
For his companion kept it straight
(As every parson's wife should do).

XXV.

They lived in wedlock, he and she,
A loving pair, until they died—
And now, together, all the three
Lie in the churchyard side by side.

TO THE BRIDE ISABEL.

(Enclosing a Heart's-Ease.)

O MAIDEN, I who, many miles away,
This wayside letter of remembrance send,
To intercept thy coming wedding-day,
That hastens hither ere the roses end,
Send with it (better than a rose) a flower
Less fair, yet fitter for thy feast:
A flower worth all the gardens of the East,
And rich enough to be thy bridal-dower:
For, having heart's-ease, hast thou not enough?
But heart's-ease is a perishable stuff—
A fading flower that hath not long to live—
A mocking gift that is not mine to give:
Yet as I give the emblem, I uplift
A prayer that God will add the perfect gift.
But we who pray, know not for what we plead.
If He Who knoweth every human need
Should overrule my gift, and make it vain,
And then bestow instead His gift of pain;
If at His finger-touch thy heart's-ease fade,
And wither into heart-break,—O fair maid,
Who knowest now of love, but not of grief,
Go question all the sorrows of the world,
And thou shalt find that Sorrowing Love is chief!
As if a wedding-tress should burst its braid,
Or twisted ringlet droop and hang uncurled,
And shake its orange-blossoms to the ground,—
So love at last may loose what first it bound,
And drop the joys wherewith it once was crowned.
But as a bird that hath a heavenward wing
May shed a plume, yet shall not cease to sing,—
So Love, despite her losses, waxeth strong,
And bears above them all a cheery song.
When thou (like other brides whose hearts have burned
With over-joy of love) hast also learned
(And wept in learning) that through all the years
Love often hath her bosom pierced of spears,—
Oh learn, by discipline of thorn and sting,
That Sorrow also is a sacred thing!
There never yet was any wedding-ring
That did not make a marriage unto tears!

When thou this fading flower away shalt fling,
May Love that hath no earthly sorrow bring
Thy bosom heart's-ease from celestial spheres!

A GOOD-BYE HYMN.

(On closing School for the Summer.)

I.

WE sing a song, and then we part!
How swiftly time is winging!
But sweet are farewells of the heart
When they are said in singing.
The roses climb the garden-wall;
The buds have long been blowing;
The summer's breezy voices call,
And we must now be going!

II.

The oriole trembles in her nest,
Which every wind is swaying;
The robin sings and shows his breast
While we are here delaying;
The bees have set their pipes in tune
On every head of clover;
And we must haste to hear them soon,
Or summer will be over!

III.

O God of every lowly heart
And every lofty feeling,
Be Thou adored for what Thou art
In Nature's own revealing!
Wherever summer's grass is green,
Or winter's snow is hoary,
The hiding of Thy face is seen—
We know Thee by Thy glory!

IV.

If we who sing a parting song
Have mortal meeting never,
There is a journey, short or long,
Where summer lasts for ever!
All hail, O fairest land of lands,
Whose blossoms never wither!
Although we here unclasp our hands,
Our feet shall travel thither!

II.

O Marvell's self, arise instead,
To warn the living by the dead,
How Freedom may be lost,
Though won at bloody cost!

III.

What! shall we here, in Freedom's Land,
Stamp once agen the bondman's brand
Upon the freeman's cheek,—
Yet ask him to be *meek*?

IV.

The Nation, puny in her might!—
Sent forth her lowliest to the fight,
Until by men enslaved
The free themselves were saved!

V.

But, O victorious State!—unjust,
Perfidious, false to Freedom's trust,—
Thy feet are trampling now
The men who crowned thy brow¹.

VI.

Before the Judge of all the earth,
Men hold an equal rank of birth,
An equal law of breath,
An equal dust of death!

VII.

O Freedom! bring with flying wing
The time when neither Slave nor King,
Nor yoke nor tyrant's chain,
Shall on the Earth remain!

VIII.

Meanwhile I lay thee on the ground,
O harp, nor smite thee to a sound,—
For in this evil day,
Vain is a poet's lay.

IX.

O let the tardy Earth remould
And cast anew her Age of Gold,—
When just a poet's song
Shall crumble down a wrong!

¹ Written in 1865, while as yet the American negroes, who had loyally served the North during the Civil War, had not received their citizenship and civil rights.

NO AND YES.

I.

I WATCHED her at her spinning,
And this was my beginning
Of wooing and of winning.

II.

So cruel, so uncaring,
So scornful was her bearing,
She set me half despairing!

III.

Yet sorry wit one uses
Who loves, and thinks he loses
Because a maid refuses.

IV.

Love prospers in the making
By help of all its aching
And quaking and heart-breaking!

V.

A woman's first denying
Betokens her complying
Upon a second trying!

VI.

When first I said in pleading,
'Behold, my heart lies bleeding!' —
She shook her head unheeding.

VII.

But when agen I told her,
And blamed her growing colder,
She dropped against my shoulder.

VIII.

Then, with her eyes of splendour,
She gave a look so tender,
I knew she would surrender!

IX.

So down the lane I led her,
And while her cheek grew redder,
I sued outright to wed her!

X.

Good end from bad beginning!
My wooing came to winning!
—God bless her at her spinning!

THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES.

‘Are they not all ministering spirits?’

I.

I LEANED upon a burial urn,
And thought how life is but a day,
And how the nations, each in turn,
Have lived and passed away.

II.

The earth is peopled with the dead,
Who live agen in deathless hosts,
And come and go with noiseless tread—
A universe of ghosts.

III.

They follow after flying ships,
They flicker through the City's marts,
They hear the cry of human lips—
The beat of human hearts.

IV.

They linger not around their tombs,
But far from churchyards keep aloof,
And dwell in old familiar rooms
Beneath the household roof.

V.

They waken men at morning light,
They cheer them in their daily care,
They bring a weary world at night
To bend the knee in prayer.

VI.

Their errand is of God assigned
To comfort sorrow till it cease,—
For in the dark and troubled mind
They light the lamp of peace.

VII.

There is a language, whispered low,
Whereby to mortal ears they speak,—
To which we answer by a glow
That kindles in the cheek.

VIII.

Dear shadows, fairer than the day,
 With heavenly light they wrap us round,
 Wherein we walk a gilded way,
 And over holy ground!

IX.

O what a wondrous life is theirs!—
 To fling away the mortal frame
 Yet keep the human loves, and cares,
 And yearnings still the same!

X.

O what a wondrous life is ours!—
 To dwell within this earthly range,
 Yet parley with the heavenly powers—
 Two worlds in interchange!

XI.

O balm of grief!—to understand
 That whom our eyes behold no more
 Still clasp us with as true a hand
 As in the flesh before.

XII.

No longer in a gloom profound
 Let Memory, like a mourner craped,
 Sit weeping by an empty mound
 Whose captive hath escaped.

XIII.

So, turning from the burial urn,
 I thought how life has double worth
 If men be wise enough to learn
 That heaven is on the earth.

*THE ARTLESS ART.*

I.

I SANG my lady many a lay
 To win her by the music in it,
 But word and tune were thrown away
 Till, haply on a morn in May,
 I chanced to hear a singing linnet.

II.

Now many a bird of brighter coat
May plume himself on his apparel,
But never in a warbler's throat
Was trilled a more enchanting note
Than quivered in that linnet's carol.

III.

'O tiny, passion-tortured thing,
Thy song,' quoth I, 'hath all its rapture
Because the wooing-time of spring
Is on thee now, and thou dost sing
Thy velvet-mantled mate to capture.

IV.

'With such a song, O bonny bird,
If I could sing it half so sweetly,
Then, haply, if my lady heard,—
Her stony bosom would be stirred,
And I would win her love completely!

V.

'So I implore thee to impart
Unto thy ruder brother-poet,
The secret of the songful art
To charm a lady's haughty heart
Till on the singer she bestow it.'

VI.

'No art is mine to tell thee of,'
The songster said, 'for I disdain it!
Go ask the robin—ask the dove—
Ask every bird that sings of love!—
We feel it, but we never feign it!

VII.

'Then go and woo as song-birds do,
Who, from the seed-time to the sickle,
Love faithfully the season through,
Nor change the *old* love for a *new*,
Nor prove (as men do) false and fickle!

VIII.

'Forbear a poet's fatal pride
In praising every charmer's beauty,
But ever to thy chosen bride,—
To her alone, and none beside,—
Sing thou a song of love and duty.'

IX.

—On that same day, with hope elate,
 Beneath an arbour green and shady,
 To that same maid who held my fate,—
 Like that same linnet to his mate,
 I sang my lay, and won my lady!

*THE MONK'S MATIN.*

(An Ungregorian Chant.)

I.

OUR night has vanished like a dream!
 How fast the witching hours flew by!
 The moon too kindly veiled her beam:—
 We might have feared a clearer sky.

II.

We could not see each other's face,
 For not a fire-fly lit his spark:
 May Heaven forgive our mad embrace!—
 For we were blinded by the dark.

III.

Within our garden of delight,
 We thought the rose without a thorn;
 And so we snatched the sweet at night,
 Nor ever felt the sting till morn.

IV.

So pure of wrong was our intent,
 So free our love appeared of blame,
 That would the midnight never went!—
 And would the morning never came!

*THE BROKEN VOW.*

A WOMAN'S STORY.

(In Adsley Park.)

THIS spot is where we parted; and I think
 That had he not turned back, to give the chain
 That bound our hearts another golden link,
 I might have suffered, when it snapt, less pain.

But parting here, he loitered in the lane,
Then stopt; and leaning on the garden-gate,
He whistled like a robin to his mate:
Till I, with merry mocking of his call,
Ran down to catch him at the garden-wall.

Uplifting both his hands, he seized a vine
And shook a storm of dew upon my hair:
Then spying roses near, 'O maiden mine,'
He said, 'I pluck for thee a bud so fair
That had it grown in any Eastern clime—
Where Love is writ in flowers instead of rhyme—
And were it folded, thus, within thy hand,
Mayhap a woman's wit would understand
That her departing lover hies to bring
With swift returning steps her wedding-ring!'

I heard—and trembled—and stood queenly crowned—
But cast my eyes, bewildered, to the ground,
And asked myself, How could it be that I,
So lowly-born, should mate with one so high?

I turned my face to brush away a tear.

He bent his head, and whispered in my ear,
'Dear love, my loitering feet, so loth to go,
Shall speed me back before this bud shall blow.'

He went. That day was like a golden dream
And he the light that set the day aglow,
And I the mote that floated in his beam.

Then on the marble mantel of my room
I placed the bud, and nursed it into bloom,
And kist the very thorns from day to day!

And yet the laggard truant stayed away!

At first I saw the calyx swell—and crack—
And break the promise of his coming back!

Then through the empty days I asked myself,
Why comes he not? At last the chilly shelf
Whereon the fiery petals fell had grown
Like sandal-wood for fragrance, or the stone
That Pilgrim's kiss upon the Prophet's tomb.

Outspread like pages of the Book of Doom,
The leaves too sweetly told my bitter fate.

His feet returned not to the garden-gate ;
 His face I have not looked upon since then ;
 His name is written with the rich and great ;
 His fame is high among the famous men.

O Thou Who sittest on the Judgement Throne,
 Forbid my heart to harbour human hate,
 But henceforth let me trust in Thee alone !

THE KING'S COURAGE.

The historic incident on which this *jeu d'esprit* is founded is given by
 Plutarch in his *Life of Dion*.

I.

KING Dionysius reigned in Syracuse ;
 And ancient chroniclers have tartly told—
 To his discredit—that his life was loose ;
 Till his transgressions grew so manifold
 That Plato, the philosopher, made bold
 To warn him, at the risk of being rude,
 That kings, through luxury, lose fortitude !
 But the philosopher, though wise, was wrong :
 The royal reveller did a deed, ere long,
 The bravest ever sung by poet's song !

II.

For where there is a will there is a way
 (At least, if that old proverb tells the truth):
 So Dionysius fixt his wedding-day,
 And cried, 'A lack of fortitude, forsooth !
 Does Plato take me for a limpid youth ?
 O great philosopher thou art a dunce !'
 The King—who loved two women—both at once—
 Stood up between them—one on either side—
 And marrying both, endured each jealous bride,
 And lived a hero after Plato died !

THE MOTHER'S PRAYER.

I.

WITH eager arms a mother pressed
 A laughing babe against her breast.

II.

Then thus to Heaven she cried in prayer :
 'Now even as his face is fair,

III.

'O Lord, keep Thou his soul within
As free from any spot of sin.'

IV.

From Heaven the Lord an answer made :
'Behold, I grant as thou hast prayed.'

V.

Within her door the darkness crept,
And babe and mother sweetly slept.

VI.

The belfry rang the midnight bell ;
The watchman answered 'All is well.'

VII.

The mother, by the cradle-side,
Awoke to find the babe had died.

VIII.

With grief to set a woman wild
She caught and clasped the marble child,—

IX.

Until her heart against his own
Was broken, beating on a stone.

X.

'O God!' she cried in her despair,
'Why hast thou mocked a mother's prayer?'

XI.

Then answered He, 'As I have willed,
Thy prayer, O woman, is fulfilled :

XII.

'If on the earth thy child remain,
His soul shall gather many a stain :

XIII.

'At thy behest, I stretch My hand
And take him to the heavenly land.'

XIV.

The mother heard, and bowed her head,
And laid her cheek against the dead,

XV.

And cried, 'O God! I dare not pray—
Thou answerest in so strange a way!'

XVI.

In shadow of a taper's light
She moaned through all the livelong night ;

XVII.

But when the morning brought the sun,
She prayed, 'Thy will, O God, be done.'

RECOMPENSE.

THE Temple of the Lord stood open wide,
And worshippers went up from many lands,
Who, kneeling at the altar, side by side,
Made votive-offerings with uplifted hands.

Their gifts were gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Then, with a lustrous gleam and rapturous stir,
While all the people trembled and turned pale,
There flew an Angel to the altar-rail,
Who, with anointed eyes, keen to discern,
Gazed, noting all the kneelers, who they were,
And what was each one's tribute to the Lord,—
And, gift for gift, with sudden, swift return,
Bestowed on every suppliant his reward.

O mocking recompense! To one, a spear!
To many, each a thorn! To some, a nail!
To all, a cross! But unto none, a crown!

At last, they saw the Angel disappear.

Then, as their timid hearts shook off their fear,
Some rose in anger, flung their treasures down,
And cried, 'Such gifts from Heaven as these, we spurn!
They are too cruel, and too keen to bear!
They are too grievous for a human breast!
Heaven sends us heartache, misery, and despair!
We knelt for blessing, but we rise unblessed!
If Heaven so mock us, we will cease to pray!'

They left the altar, and they went their way;
But their blaspheming hearts were then self-torn
Far more by pride and heaven-defying scorn,
Than pierced before by nail, or spear, or thorn!

A few (not many!) with their brows down bent,
Gave thanks for each sharp gift that Heaven had sent,—
And each embraced his separate pain and sting
As if it were some sweet and pleasant thing,—
And each his cross with joyful tears did take,
To bear it for the great Cross-bearer's sake.

Then lo! as from the Temple forth they went,
Their bleeding bosoms, though with anguish rent,
Were calmed with sudden, swift, and sweet content;
For on each brow, though not to mortal sight,
The vanished Angel left a crown of light.

THE GRAVE ON THE PRAIRIE.

I GALLOPED once with horse and hound
Across the Texan prairie,
Till, on a gentle swell of ground,
I halted by a flowery mound
That bore the name of MARY.

It was not where the living dwelt,
Nor was it yet God's Acre,
But all a lonely, boundless belt,
Where she whose name the letters spelt
Dwelt only with her Maker.

No crumbling wall, nor rotting rail,
Nor palisade of osier,
Remained to show, however frail,
It once had girt the sacred pale,
Or guarded the enclosure.

No date was carved of death or birth,
No line of love or honour,—
No tribute to departed worth,—
Yet she who mouldered, earth to earth,
Had all earth's pomp upon her.

For prairie-flowers, for many a mile,
In every gay direction
Shook in the wind, and all the while
Kept rendering back the sun his smile,
And twinkling in reflection.

The cactus¹ flaunted far and near
His blossom red and splendid,
Which nibbling sheep approached with fear,—
Half daunted by the spiny spear
With which it was defended.

Beneath a live-oak, green and high,
The humble grave was shaded;—
So, halting there,—my horse and I
Sought refuge from the burning sky;
For now we both were jaded.

¹ Millions of these grotesque and bristling plants are scattered over the Lone Star state. Sometimes a cluster measures a hundred feet in circumference—reaching to the height of a man's head on horseback, or even higher. The thorny edges of the leaves are burnt off, and the succulent plant then is given as fodder to cattle.

The hanging moss ¹—with mournful grace
Each lofty limb festooning—
Lent funeral garlands to the place,—
Where, tarrying from my morning chase,
I took my hour of nooning.

The hounds, all panting from their quest,
I leashed with easy fetter,
And sat me by the dead to rest ;
For not so good is life at best,
But that the grave is better.

So while the roebuck joined his herd
In peace from my pursuing,
I from the gravestone never stirred:
And Death seemed but a hope deferred,—
Sure of a bright renewing.

No frightened plover whirred his wing ;
No startled rabbit bounded ;
And not a bird made bold to sing ;
Nor in the grass a creeping thing
His chirping trumpet sounded.

No wanderer ever went that way
Except some cattle-ranger²,
Or Indian of a former day,
Or settler discontent to stay,
Or (like myself) some stranger.

Yet there, at rest, lay one who came,
Too weary for returning,—
Who bore, in death, that deathless name
To which the Church's altar-flame
Is round the world kept burning.

—Now *who* was she whose name alone
Thus stopt me as I wandered?—
Whose life, unstoried on the stone,
Whose fortune, all untold, unknown,
I vaguely guessed and pondered.

¹ Gigantic live-oak trees, each hung with trailing grey moss, are among the conspicuous objects which strike the eye of a traveller in the southern portions of the United States.

² It is no uncommon thing in Texas for a man to own ten, fifteen, or twenty thousand head of cattle ; and the herdsmen who tend these immense herds range on horseback over hundreds of miles of wild prairie.

The fate with which I grew beguiled
Eluded my endeavour;
For was she babe?—or romping child?—
Or madcap maiden, free and wild,
Now fallen asleep for ever?

Or was she one of wedded twain,
Beloved and yet forsaken?—
Whom, lonely on the flowery plain,
The westward-toiling wagon-train
Had left,—for God had taken?

Or was it age that bade her bow,
Till,—old and faint and failing,—
She died a dame of wrinkled brow,
For whom th' unfurrowed prairie now
Her furrowed face was veiling?

I only know that, short or long,
Her life was with the humble,
Yet I enroll it with the throng
Of all who proudly live in song
When brass and marble crumble.

O Mary, like thy vernal clime
Whose year is un-Decembered¹—
For ever blooming in its prime,—
So, never-withering be the rhyme
That keeps thy name remembered!

—And what of *him* who, with his spade,
Cleft open turf and gravel,
And dug the grave where she was laid,—
And heaped the hill, and knelt and prayed,—
And joined his train of travel?

Carved rudely on the slab of slate,
The letters looked ungainly;—
Yet though the carver could not wait
To linger over day and date,
He told his anguish plainly.

O sorrow, keener than the knife
That sculptured there its story,—
O woe that wept for child or wife!—
O mortal pain!—like human life
Ye too are transitory!

¹ The table-lands of Texas may be said to have an almost perpetual spring, and the author has seen Texan settlers, possessing comfortable cabins, and yet preferring to sleep out of doors in winter, around a fire on the open prairie.

For God, in mercy to mankind,
Endows the heart with feeling,
Yet lodges reason in the mind,
That man may have the wit to find
For every hurt a healing.

The lightnings on the ocean play,
And shoot their bolts of thunder,
And fleets are wrecked (the tidings say)—
Yet still the world goes on its way
As if no ship went under.

The chieftain falls,—and all his clan,
Whom he had died defending,
Forget him for some lordlier man,—
Whose glory, too, is but a span,
And glimmers to an ending.

The bridegroom drops,—and day and night,
With sorrow unexceeded,
The bride bewails her widowed plight,—
Until, with heavy heart grown light,
She is at last unweeded.

The heart, however great its grief,
Or dearly this be cherished,
Or clung to for a season brief,
Soon sheds it like a loosened leaf
That by the frost hath perished.

The bleeding heart survives the blow,
The pulses cease their raging,
The fever cools,—and so we know,
There never comes a human woe
But brings its own assuaging.

So what if Mary in the mould,
With carven stone above her,
Was wept when first her clay grew cold,
And mourned with sorrow manifold
By wedded lord or lover?—

Shall then a carping world upbraid
And call him hollow-hearted,
Or false to Mary's sacred shade,
If he shall woo another maid,
And tie the cord that parted?

There is a time for tears,—but then
 There comes a truce to sorrow :
 It is the manly way of men :
 They love, and lose, and love agen,
 And wed anew to-morrow.

—I lay at rest an hour or more,
 But when the hounds, long hampered,
 Began to whimper, and implore
 To hunt the roebuck as before,—
 I loosed them, and they scampered.

Hard after them, with leap and prance,
 I galloped down the prairie,—
 And thought how odd a circumstance
 That I, a stranger, was perchance
 Sole mourner left for Mary!



THE BARREN FIG-TREE'S REPLY.

‘The time of figs was not yet.’—ST. MARK.

I AM accurst—I wilt—I fade—I die !
 For hither yestermorn a Nazarene
 (A God, they say, yet of a mortal mien)
 Came blighting me with lightning from His eye :
 And now agen to-day He draweth nigh,
 Followed by many a gazing Gergesene
 Agape with wonder that a tree so green
 Should wither at a word and shrink and dry,
 Ready for axe to cut and fire to burn !
 Tell me, O Prophet (for I now discern
 That Thou art more than rabbi or than seer),
 What was my fault, or my offence, or crime ?
 Thou camest for my figs before their time :
 How could I yield them ere their season due ?
 How could I haste for Thee the rolling year ?
 Why didst Thou curse me then, O cruel Jew ?
 Shall I be curst, yet curse not in return ?
 O Teacher, Thou hast yet a thing to learn :
 I know an ancient prophecy which saith
 That Christ the Lord shall die a shameful death !
 If Thou, O smiter of my bloom, be He—
 Die Thou upon a thrice-accursèd Tree !

THE BRIGAND'S VESPER-HYMN.

A.D. 1630.

Osmin d'Ordrado was a brigand in the Pyrenees. He had no wife, but lived on a memory and a hope. In his bivouac after supper, to please his comrades, he sometimes sang what he called his vesper-hymn, as follows: -

MY darling and I together
Stood under a lilac-tree:
She gave me her vow of betrothal
And sealed it with kisses three.

The balms that the Queen of Sheba
Brought Solomon from the South
Were nought to my darling's kisses—
She kissed me upon the mouth.

And after her trine of kisses,
I gave for her plighted hand
A three-jewelled ring—to rival
The stars of Orion's band.

The stones were the brightest jewels
That ever were lit with flame!
They twinkled as if they loved her!
She gave to them each a name!

The name of the first was Honour,
The name of the next was Truth,
The name of the last and brightest
Was Hope as the Star of Youth.

The ring? It is on her finger!
It burns in her graveyard clay!
She wears it arrayed for bridal—
Awaiting her wedding-day.

The priests in their masses for her
Proclaim her a saint above!
—O darling, be Saint or Angel,
Yet *I* am thy Lover, love!

Thy lilac! It now is withered!
But ever Orion's band
Shines tripled in Heaven, to tell me
That *there* I shall clasp thy hand.

THE BARD'S BURIAL.

Written for the funeral of the American Poet, William Henry Burleigh¹.

IS this the only tribute we should pay?—
 These funeral flowers that to his bier belong?
 Himself a singer, he deserves a song:
 But who has any heart to sing to-day?
 Should any stranger chance to come this way,
 And view with tearless eyes this lump of earth,
 And call for witness to its living worth,
 Our grief would choke the words that we would say!
 Let us be silent—like our silent dead:
 Whose virtues,—Truth, Faith, Honour, and the rest,—
 With one loud-chanted requiem, all have said:
 'Behold, our chosen dwelling was his breast!'
 Since tongues like these have spoken, dumb be ours!
 —So let us sweetly leave him with his flowers.

THE MYSTIC MESSAGE.

Time—the reign of Philippe Auguste.

Place—the Island of Malta.

I.

A WILD-EYED Virgin, strange in her attire,
 Watched the Crusading Hosts, in their advance,
 And gazed from line to line, from lance to lance,
 With eager look to see the King of France;
 Whom, when she spied, she knelt to, saying, 'Sire,
 I bring to thee, through forest, moor, and mire,
 This Urn of Water, and this Torch of Fire!'

II.

The wondering King upraised her from her knees,
 Received her gifts, and asked, 'Why bring you these?'

III.

'My liege,' she answered, 'at the dead of night
 There came to me an Angel, clad in white,
 Who called to me and said, "O child of grace,
 The Lord Christ grieveth for the human race,—
 For He appeals to mortal men in vain
 Save through their hope of bliss, or fear of bane:
 Why seek they Heaven? For love of God? Not so!—

¹ Born at Woodstock, Ct., February 8, 1812, and died at Brooklyn, N. Y. March 18, 1871.

But only for the bliss they hope to gain!
 Why shun they Hell? For hate of evil? No!—
 But only to escape the woe and pain!
 Wherefore, O child, at the Lord Christ's desire,
 Arise! He hath for thee an errand! Go!—
 Go with swift feet that loiter not, nor tire!
 Go as the wild hare runs through brake and brier!
 Go as the swallow speeds upon the wing!
 Go! and in going, carry to the King
 Two emblems which the King will understand:

IV.

“One is this Torch that cannot cease to burn
 In storm or wind! One is this Water-urn
 That cannot fail to flow!—for though it spill,
 It still keeps full,—to work the Heavenly Will.

V.

“Give first the Torch into the King's own hand,
 And bid him whirl—three times—the burning brand!—
 Round—round—and round his head!—and let it fly
 Straight at the very zenith of the sky,
 To set high Heaven on fire, and burn it low,
 Till all its crumbled walls with ashes glow,
 And not a gate remain to enter by!

VI.

“And give him then the Urn, and bid him pour
 The water through some crevice in Earth's floor!—
 Down—down—deep down into the depths of Hell!—
 Whose fire these cooling drops shall quench and quell,—
 Till the Infernal Flame shall blaze no more!”

VII.

‘This do, O King, at the Lord Christ's behest,—
 Till round the rolling Earth, from east to west,
 No Heaven nor Hell shall evermore be known,
 But God be worshipt for Himself alone!’

VIII.

Her errand done,—with sudden leap and bound
 The virgin vanished out of sight and sound!

IX.

Then in the ancient annals it is writ,—
 That the King, looking whither she had fled,
 Gazed long,—and kist his Crucifix,—and said:
 ‘What though the maid be mad? Yet in the wit
 Of fools and children oftentimes there lies
 A wisdom greater far than of the wise!’

THE FOUR SEASONS.

I.

I N the balmy April weather,
My love, you know,—
(When the corn began to grow)—
What walks we took together,
What sighs we breathed together,
What vows we pledged together,—
In the days of long ago!

II.

In the golden summer weather,
My love, you know,—
(When the mowers went to mow)—
What home we built together,
What plans we planned together,
What babes we watched together,—
While the skies were all aglow!

III.

In the rainy autumn weather,
My love, you know,—
(When the winds began to blow)—
What tears we shed together,
What hopes we lost together,
What graves we dug together,—
When we laid our darlings low!

IV.

In the wild and wintry weather,
My love, you know,—
(With our heads as white as snow)—
What fears we share together,
What prayers we pray together,—
What Heaven we seek together,—
For our time has come to go!



SOLILOQUY OF LAZARUS.

A FACE-CLOTH on my face? I draw no breath?
 Bound hand and foot? Laid in a stony cave?
 O Christ of Nazareth, I am in my grave!
 Speak, Lord of Life, and call Thy dead from death!
 —Thou speakest! For I hear a voice that saith
 ‘Where have ye laid him? Lazarus, come forth!’
 —My tomb is cracking like the frozen North
 When Spring has resurrection from the ground!
 I breathe—I stir—my pulse begins to bound—
 My heart leaps up against my folded hands!
 Off with this winding-sheet that wraps me round!
 —Weep not, O Master! I have burst my bands!
 Thy Lazarus comes forth, and here he stands!

PRINCE AND PEASANT.

Bernicia was the old name for that part of Britain which contained what are now called the Cheviot Hills and the River Tweed.

I.

THE King of Bernicia, while hunting,
 Saw neither a fox nor a boar,
 But startled a fawn in the forest,
 Who timidly ran before;
 And this was the forester’s daughter,
 Who fled to her father’s door.

II.

The heart of her royal pursuer
 So throbbed with a rapturous beat
 That, after the manner of lovers,
 In token of homage complete
 He knelt on the threshold before her,—
 A prince at a peasant’s feet.

III.

‘O goddess,’ quoth he, ‘what mortal
 Can beauty like thine withstand?
 For wilderness, river, and mountain
 Have moulded thee wild and grand!
 So I, who am King of my kingdom,
 Sue here for thy heart and hand!’

IV.

The virgin, all mute with marvel,
Stood motionless like a tower!
And all through her cheeks ran changes,
Like flushes that streak a flower!
And merely a moment of silence
Seemed, all of a sudden, an hour!

V.

The forester spake for his daughter:—
‘My liege, she is lowly born;
No dowry is hers for a portion,
No jewels a bride to adorn;
Thou wooest to mock, not marry—
Thou speakest in jest, or scorn!’

VI.

Outwhipping his weapon in anger,
The Monarch replied with a frown,
‘How darest thou brand me a jester,
Or liken thy liege to a clown?
A King, when he wishes his wedding,
May queen whom he will with his crown!’

VII.

Then down on her knees between them
The dutiful damsel bent,—
And up through her golden tresses
A glittering glance she sent,
That seemed like a flying javelin,
And straight to their hearts it went.

VIII.

She cried to them, ‘Cease your quarrel,
And bid me to love you both!
For *why* should a peasant’s daughter
To marry a prince be loth?
O father, I plead for thy blessing—
O lover, I plight thee my troth!’

IX.

The King, though in Lincoln doublet,
As green as a summer elm,—
With neither his crest nor armour,—
With neither his crown nor helm,—
Yet spake as the Lord’s anointed,
The Sovereign of the realm!

X.

'The gift of a woman's beauty
Must come from the gods,' quoth he ;
'But as for an earthly honour,
And as for a high degree,—
A King to a carl may give it !
Thy father a lord shall be !

XI.

'For nature has made him noble,—
And here, in his daughter's sight,
I whack him upon his shoulder
And dub him a noble knight !—
An honour that only in ballads
Falls ever to such a wight !'

XII.

The Monarch embraced the maiden,—
And each to the other clung,—
And never in any ballad
That ever has yet been sung,
Was ever so mad a marriage
Since time and the world were young !

XIII.

'My love,' said the royal lover,
'Thy father shall be an earl !
The earth, it shall give thee a ruby,
The sea, it shall give thee a pearl,—
And Heaven, it shall give thee a blessing,
O princess and peasant-girl !'

XIV.

The aisle of the old cathedral,
That up to the altar led,
Was strown for their feet with lilies,
And thither they walked to be wed,—
In presence of throngs of the living,
In presence of tombs of the dead.

XV.

The bride-cake was big as a mountain,—
And virgins from near and far
Put crumbs of it under their pillows
To dream of the lucky star
That dawns on a fortunate marriage—
(If marriages ever are !)

XVI.

For since they are made in Heaven
 (Or certes the proverb is wrong)
 Of course they so very rarely
 To Earth,—or to mortals,—belong,
 That perfectly-married people
 Wed only in story or song!

XVII.

Now as to the truth of the ditty,
 If doubters be hard to convince,
 Or deem it so very unlikely
 A peasant could marry a prince,—
 Why, let them remember it happened
 Some thousands of centuries since!

 THE CHANT CELESTIAL.

‘Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter: therefore, ye soft pipes, play on.’
 KEATS, *Ode to a Grecian Urn*.

I.

KING Arthur, in his palace of Pendragon,
 Sat feasting with his princes, late and long,
 And to his oldest minstrel sent a flagon—
 To fire his aged fancy to a song.

II.

Uprose the hoary harper, blind and saintly,
 Whose ninety-wintered beard besnowed his breast,
 Who, harping with his palsied fingers faintly,
 Thus sang (though softly) at the King’s behest:

III.

‘Give ear, whoever sorrows or rejoices,
 While I, too old for either mirth or tears,
 Shall rhyme of those celestial harps and voices
 That chant the fabled Music of the Spheres.

IV.

‘I sing of worlds before the earth was present,—
 A song of times ere Time itself began,—
 Before the silvery moon had lit her crescent,
 Or sun his fire, or lived a mortal man.

V.

'The primal universe had chaos in it,
For night with triple darkness wrapt it round,
Nor was there greenening leaf, nor singing linnet,
Nor any other cheering sight, nor sound.

VI.

'Then, while the mighty mists were still concealing
The yet unmoulded world where now we dwell,
God ordered heavenly music to go pealing
Round its dead orb—to wake it with a spell.

VII.

'Within a shining cloud that veiled their faces
Ten thousand seraphs, each with harp in hand,
Flew chanting through those dim and empty spaces
That afterward were filled with sea and land.

VIII.

'The stars that on the morning of creation
Together sang to Him Who made them fair,
First caught their canticle of adoration
From this immortal murmur in the air.

IX.

'Before the mountains had their high upheaval,
Before the caverns of the deep were laid,
This was Creation's harmony primaeval,—
The rhythm to which the whirling world was made.

X.

'Sweet herald of the will of the Creator,
It timed the birth of Nature, then unborn ;
And, warbling through the zodiac and equator,
It woke the seasons, and led forth the morn.

XI.

'From pole to pole, from Capricorn to Cancer,
Things lifeless into life it did beguile,
Till marble Memnon¹ heard it and made answer,
And stony Sphinx retold it to the Nile.

¹ The poetic story that the Statue of Memnon, when smitten by the morning light, gave forth music, has a basis of truth. The stone—which cools by night, to be heated again by day—emits during this cooling process, certain crackling sounds. These sounds, however, are audible mainly to persons who imagine them to be heard. Sceptical listeners are unrewarded by any hum or whisper, either from Memnon or the Sphinx.

XII.

'The rustling boughs of Lebanon, gigantic,
Rehearsed it to the tiniest herbs that grew;—
And from the swelling wave of the Atlantic
It quavered to the trembling drop of dew.

XIII.

'When round the Ark the Deluge rose, appalling,—
From this melodious cloud a harp was hurled
Whose seven immortal strings took fire in falling,
And gave the Rainbow to a stormy world.

XIV.

'A soaring Lark, that heard the heavenly singing,
Brought down the song to all his fellow-throats,—
Till every greenwood now is ever ringing
With lowly pipings of those lofty notes.

XV.

'Beneath a myrtle sat a Poet, sighing,
Because he could not tune his jangled lyre,
Who heard the wondrous chant above him flying,
And chorded to it each rebellious wire.

XVI.

'So lucent was the cloud,—so sky-adorning,—
That when it crossed Olympus on its way,
It lent Aurora light to flush the morning,
And gave Apollo gold to gild the day.

XVII.

'It flashed the sparkle which the moon saw glancing
Upon the waters of Castalia's fount,
And lent the Muses music for their dancing
Until they vanished from their vernal mount.

XVIII.

'From India's sacred coast of Coromandel
To Mecca's hallowed temple went the sound,
Till he who listened laid aside his sandal,
And flung him prostrate on the holy ground.

XIX.

'It blew a trumpet over Sinai's mountain,
That woke an earthquake by its awful tone,—
While he who smote the rock and loosed the fountain
Received the Tables Twain of graven stone.

XX.

'Its harps were echoed by the harp of Zion,
That prophesied of nations reconciled,
And of the peaceful day when Lamb and Lion
Shall twain be yoked together by a Child.

XXI.

'The Shepherds heard it, who by night were tending
Their sleepy sheep on Bethlehem's holy hill,
To whose low summit came the cloud descending,
With all its Angels, chanting, Peace!—good-will!

XXII.

'This was the cloud beneath whose pealing thunders
The Temple reeled, the Tombs flew open wide,
And all the day grew dark with signs and wonders
When Calvary's Cross upbore the Crucified!'

XXIII.

[Here paused the bard; and at the Name All Holy,
The king and princes, to the King of Kings,
Each crossed his breast, and bowed in reverence lowly,—
The bard the lowliest,—and resumed the strings:]

XXIV.

Said he, 'Of old, from out this cloud supernal,
Those guilty seraphs who did Heaven assault
Were headlong plunged to the abyss infernal,
And discord vanished out of Heaven's blue vault.

XXV.

'But discord on the Earth is ever raging,
For human hate is quenchless in its flame;
Yet, high above the wars that men are waging,
The Angels still go singing all the same!

XXVI.

'Above the flying world—but never near it—
Their floating chant is carolled through the sky,
So faint and far that mortals hardly hear it,
Yet he who hearkens, hears it by and by.

XXVII.

'It smites the air with such a soft vibration
That some who hear it think it not a sound,
But fancy it their spirits' own pulsation
That thrills the sense with ecstasy profound.

XXVIII.

'It chimes to deserts and dim wildernesses,
In swift pursuit where wandering feet have trod;
And whom it overtakes, it sweetly blesses,—
And fills the Pilgrim with the peace of God.

XXIX.

'It chanteth to the Sailor on the ocean,
And in the tempest gives his soul a calm;
It seeks the Hermit, rapt in his devotion,
And trills and trembles in his prayer and psalm.

XXX.

'Beyond all melody of pipe or tabor
When merry maidens dance with happy men,
It glads the groaning Captive at his labour,
And cheers the Exile, hunted to his den.

XXXI.

'To all who weep at bedsides of the dying,
To all who kiss their dead and lay them low,
To all the sorrowing world, with all its sighing,—
It chants a solace greater than the woe.

XXXII.

'O cloud-wrapt cloud, hid in the heights Elysian,
If waking eyes may not behold thy gleams,
Let loose Thy Angels, as in Jacob's Vision,
To steal upon our sleeping world in dreams!

XXXIII.

'Fulfil to men the sweet prophetic story
Of Him foretold by all the holy seers!—
Of Him Whose Chariot is a Cloud of Glory!—
Of Him Who comes to reign a thousand years!

XXXIV.

'O harbinger of His delayed Appearing!—
For Whom we cry, How long, O God, how long!—
I see, though blind, a vision of thy nearing!—
I hail thee, harp for harp, and song for song!'

XXXV.

—So sang the minstrel till his strength was ended;
And when his song was done, he gasped for breath—
Uprolled his eyes to heaven—his palms extended—
And sank to the immortal calm of death.

XXXVI.

King Arthur bade the princes of his table
 Uplift and lay thereon the fallen seer;
 And on his breast they spread a pall of sable,—
 Till, black amid the banquet, was a bier.

XXXVII.

Not mortal like the bard,—his song, undying,
 Survives the singer and his broken lyre,—
 For, round the earth the Angels, ever flying,
 Keep chanting it with their Celestial Choir¹.

FRITZ OTTOCAR'S FELLOW-HUNTSMAN.

(In Saxon Switzerland.)

I.

I WONDER what keeps my comrade;
 The daybreak is all aglow!
 Once more I will blow my bugle—
 O ho! tally-ho! O ho!

II.

He never has been a laggard,—
 For, into the forest dim,
 How often I thus have started
 At peep o' the light with him!

III.

He wingeth the truest arrow
 That ever a mountaineer
 Sent out of a cross-bow, whizzing
 With death to a dappled deer.

IV.

Why pipeth he back no answer?
 He maketh no sound nor sign!
 I hear tally-ho in echo—
 But echoing only mine.

¹ Though the question is constantly re-arising, 'At what epoch did King Arthur reign?' yet of course this *Flos Regum*—this 'flower of kings'—being only a myth, has no exact date in strict history. If, however, he is to be deemed a Saxon, he must be at least as late as the fifth century, when the first Saxon monarchy in England was founded. His proper era seems logically to be the Dark Ages—at that gloomy period when, after the long disappearance of the Holy Grail from the Earth, and when, after the many widespread triumphs of Paganism over Christianity on three continents, King Arthur—the most Christian of Kings—became the first and mystical forerunner of the Crusades for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre.

V.

Whenever he blows his bugle
It sounds in the stilly morn,
Across from the graveyard yonder,
Like Gabriel's Judgement horn!

VI.

He never till now has failed me!
I wonder if he be dead:
What hunter, on such a morning,
Would squander an hour in bed?

VII.

The river is frozen solid!—
The deer will be down to drink
From holes in the ice at sunrise—
A chance for a shot, I think!

VIII.

A beautiful crust, so crispy,
Comes once in a life, I say!
What spell has bewitched my comrade
To fool such a chance away?

IX.

By Juno! I now remember!
He yesterday took a bride!
She tangleth him in her tresses—
She bindeth him to her side!

X.

A woman can bind a fetter
Too strong for a man to rend!—
My comrade is now a captive
In bondage that cannot end!

XI.

A man is a fool to marry—
He never can come nor go!
But hark! It is he! I hear him!—
O ho! tally-ho! O ho!

THE FRENCH LESSON

I.

SHALL I teach you French, my dear?
Sit and con your lesson here:
What did Adam say to Eve?
Aimer, aimer, ah! c'est vivre!

II.

Don't roll out the *last* word long—
Clip it short to suit the song—
Rhyme it to your flowing sleeve—
Aimer, aimer, ah! c'est vivre!

III.

Sleeve I mean of course for arm—
Arm for waist—so would it harm
Just to clasp you?—by your leave?—
Aimer, aimer, ah! c'est vivre!

IV.

Speaking French is full of slips—
Do as *I* do with the lips:
Here's the method, you perceive!—
Aimer, aimer, ah! c'est vivre!

V.

Pretty pupil, when you say
All this French to me to-day,
Do you mean it, or deceive?—
Aimer, aimer, ah! c'est vivre!

VI.

Aimer, that's to love, you know!
Say it to me soft and low!
Make me feel that you believe
Aimer, aimer, ah! c'est vivre!

VII.

For in France, you understand,
When they press each other's hand,
Then their hearts together cleave!—
Aimer, aimer, ah! c'est vivre!

VIII.

Bride of beauty! In your hair,
You shall orange-blossoms wear!
When may I the garland weave?
Aimer, aimer, ah! c'est vivre!

IX.

Sweetheart, do not rise to go—
Sit and let me hold you so!
Adam did the same to Eve!—
Aimer, aimer, ah! c'est vivre!

KOSSUTH ON GORGEI'S CAPITULATION.

A. D. 1849.

I.

I COULD have better borne the blow
And throbbed with less of fever
Had he, the Traitor, been my foe
And not my Captain,—whom I know
As my deceiver.

II.

Is ancient fealty at an end?
Is shining honour rusted?
Alas, the blow to which I bend
Was from 'mine own familiar friend
In whom I trusted.'

III.

To such a blow what balm can be?
O God, it healeth never!
For even if the land were free,
My heart, a wounded aloe-tree,
Must bleed for ever!'

*SERENADE.*

I.

OPEN thy casement, and list to my lute!
Its music, O lady, is vain—
And better by far were mute—
Unless thou wilt hear the strain.

II.

Peep through thy lattice, and show me thy face!
For shortly the setting moon
Will shadow thy beauty's grace—
So show it, fair lady, soon!

III.

Down from thy balcony fling me a rope!
I linger, I long, I wait,—
With love and a lover's hope,—
For love and a lover's fate!

¹ Gorgei, the Hungarian General of 1848, and the friend and comrade of Kossuth, unexpectedly surrendered the Hungarian army; but it is fair to add, in Gorgei's behalf, that his surrender has been vindicated on the ground of military necessity, and as a humane measure to prevent the needless slaughter of his troops.

SECRET AFFINITIES.

A PANTHEISTIC MADRIGAL.

(From the French of Théophile Gautier.)

I.

ALOFT, in an Olympian fane,
Two blocks of stone—that long had lain
Close joined, and gleaming in the sun—
Commingled their white dreams in one.

II.

Born of the tears from Neptune's eyes
When Venus quit him for the skies,—
Two pearls, beneath the surging swell,
Made love within the self-same shell.

III.

On Boabdilla's flowery mount,—
Two roses, growing by a fount,
Were sprinkled by the selfsame spray,
And talked of love the livelong day.

IV.

In Venice, on a gilded dome,
Two doves,—pink-footed,—built a home,
And said, 'See how, with brood on brood,
Love is eternally renewed!'

V.

But bird and bud and stone and gem
Fulfil the doom decreed to them:
The pearl dissolves, the pigeon flies,
The marble falls, the rose-tree dies.

VI.

All earthly things that God hath wrought
He crumbles, crushing them to nought.

VII.

Back into Nature's stock and store
Their dainty dust is flung once more,
And through her crucible is passed,
And into fairer mouldings cast.

VIII.

By gentle metamorphose strange,
The marble takes a mystic change,
And quits its antique block, and now
Is moulded in a maiden's brow.

IX.

The pearls forsake their shell and brine,—
To make her mouth their nobler shrine.

X.

The roses,—which the frost-wind nips,—
Re-bloom upon her cheeks and lips.

XI.

The doves,—that from their nest depart,—
Fly back to flutter in her heart.

XII.

Thus, by a sympathy profound,
Two souls,—though severed,—yet are bound :
For unto each alike is known
The other's yearning by its own.

XIII.

Thrilled by a fragrance, hue, or ray,
An atom starts upon its way
And seeks its mate,—by the same power
That draws the bee to find the flower.

XIV.

Led on by some remembered dream
Of fane, or fount, or ocean-stream,
Or wings of doves, or kisses sweet,—
The faithful molécules shall meet !
For meet they must, and meet they will :
They seek and love each other still.

XV.

Forgotten love awakes once more ;
And perished things,—that died of yore,—
Re-born for nobler use,—at last
Complete the uncompleted past.

XVI.

So now,—to view itself,—the pearl
Looks to the laugh of some fair girl !

XVII.

So at her cheeks the rose must gaze
For memories of its former days.

XVIII.

So in her bosom, white and chill,
The marble finds its pureness still.

XIX.

And so the dove, when he complains,
Now chides her in such tender strains
That,—marble as the maid may be!—
She can no longer spurn his plea.

XX.

O you for whom I burn and glow,
Say in what antique portico,
Or in what flower, or gem, or nest.
You heard my passion first confest?
And were you then, O dearest love,
A stone, or pearl, or rose, or dove?

THE HEAVENLY HOPE.

O EARTHLY sufferer, why complain?
Amid thy anguish be thou dumb!
In spite of all thy present pain,
Thy blessedness is yet to come¹.

BONAVENTURA.

(At the foot of Mount Yscho in the Caucasus.)

I.

'NOW tell me my fortune!—and when it is told,
I promise to give thee a ruble of gold!
My lover afar—is he faithful? O say!—
Then why does he loiter so long on the way?'

¹ This was a frequent remark of the Nun of Avila (or Saint Theresa) during the distressing illness which caused her death.

II.

'I see, by thy hand, that thy lover shall ride
From over the mountain to make thee his bride!
Like dew to the bud,—or the bud to the bee,—
Be faithful to *him*!—he is faithful to *thee*!'

III.

The teller of fortunes flung off his disguise,
And *there* stood her lover, with love in his eyes!
And each of their fortunes,—more precious than gold,—
Was all that the arms of two lovers could hold!



CUPID'S PUZZLE,

AND HOW A MILKMAID SOLVED IT.

I.

A MAID, who was milking her cow in the clover,
Kept warbling a love-ditty over and over,—
And *this* was the song that she sang:
'O would there were love without plague of a lover!
For love—without lover—if *so* it could be!—
Were love without trouble and torment,' quoth she,
'And *that* is the love for *me*!'
—Then, patting her cow,
She uttered a vow;
'I never will marry, but tarry as now!
My heart is my own, and my fancy is free;
But as for a Sailor for ever at sea,
What sort of a lover is *he*?'

II.

Then, softly behind her, there stole through the clover
A Sailor just landed from all the seas over,
Who forward in front of her sprang!
'My darling, behold me, thy truant true lover!
And here is the ring that I promised to thee!—
And after the day of the wedding,' cried he,
'Farewell to the waves of the sea!'
—Now maids are inclined
To changes of mind!
So she who was cruel turned suddenly kind!
'O give me the sort of a sailor,' quoth she,
'Who never goes sailing agen on the sea!—
For *he* is the lover for *me*!'

III.

And then, when the wedding had come and was over,
 She patted her beautiful cow in the clover,
 And *this* was the song that she sang:
 'Now what do I love?—is it love, or my lover?—
 Which *is* it, I wonder, or *ought* it to be?
 And if it is *that*, is it *he*?
 Or *both*, in an equal degree?—
 —But never the bride
 Knew how to divide
 The love in her heart from the man at her side!
 'What *is* it a woman loves best?' quoth she.
 'Herself, and her love, and her lover,—all three!—
 And *this* is the love for *me*!'

SIR MARMADUKE'S MUSINGS.

I.

I WON a noble fame;
 But, with a sudden frown,
 The people snatched my crown,—
 And, in the mire, trod down
 My lofty name.

II.

I bore a bounteous purse;
 And beggars by the way
 Then blest me, day by day;
 But I, grown poor as they,
 Have now their curse.

III.

I gained what men call friends;
 But now their love is hate,—
 And I have learned, too late,
 How mated minds unmate,
 And friendship ends.

IV.

I clasped a woman's breast,—
 As if her heart, I knew,
 Or fancied, would be true,—
 Who proved, alas! she too!
 False like the rest.

v.

I now am all bereft,—
 As when some tower doth fall,
 With battlement, and wall,
 And gate, and bridge, and all,—
 And nothing left.

vi.

But I account it worth
 All pangs of fair hopes crossed—
 All loves and honours lost,—
 To gain the Heavens, at cost
 Of losing Earth.

vii.

So, lest I be inclined
 To render ill for ill,—
 Henceforth in me instil,
 O God, a sweet good-will
 To all mankind.

*THE JOY OF GRIEF.*

i.

I HAD a grief too great for tears,
 And longed to weep, but tried in vain,
 Until a Monk of snowy years
 Appeared before me in my pain,
 Who said, 'Receive what I bestow—
 Heaven's balm for all who suffer so.'

ii.

Resenting madly at the first
 The blessing of the saintly sage,
 'Depart from me—I am accursed!'
 I answered, trembling in my rage;
 'Hath Heaven a balm? I tell thee no!
 Else why am I tormented so?'

iii.

'My son,' said he, 'wring not thy hands,
 Beat not thy breast, tear not thy hair,
 But lift to Heaven thy high demands
 From knees as lowly as thy prayer,
 And bounteous Heaven shall overflow
 With showers of mercies on thee so!'

IV.

'O Monk!' quoth I, 'to God I prayed—
To grant me riches—honour—fame!
What was the answer that He made?
A beggar's purse—a caitiff's name—
Ambition's fall—hope's overthrow—
And love's own wounds, now bleeding so!—

V.

'So, strip thee off, O Monk, thy hood!
Fling down thy rosary to the dust!
There is no God—if God be good!
There is no Heaven—if Heaven be just!
Life is but mockery here below—
If grief on grief can pierce it so!'

VI.

Said he, 'O sufferer, understand
That thou art smitten of a rod
Not wielded by a mortal hand,
For He Who scourgeth thee is God—
Yet well He loveth thee—although
He needeth to chastise thee so.'

VII.

I cried, 'What is the need or gain
Of all my anguish and despair?
What profit cometh of a pain
That pierceth more than flesh can bear?
What can the tortured spirit owe
To tyrant Heaven that stings it so?'

VIII.

'My son,' he whispered, 'hear me speak:
Doth God afflict but thee alone?
He heareth many a wilder shriek—
He answereth many a deeper groan—
He striketh many a heavier blow—
He chasteneth thee and others so!—

IX.

'For Life, like Death,—through all the world,
In every age since Time began,—
With an unerring aim hath hurled
A quivering dart at every man,
Till by the torture, swift or slow,
Mankind have all been tested so!—

X.

'Take solace of the saints of old ;—
Of Daniel to the lions flung,—
Of Joseph into Egypt sold,—
Of Israel by the serpents stung ;—
If thou endure their trials, lo !
Thou shalt partake their triumphs so.'

XI.

'O Monk,' said I, 'thy proffered balm
Is bitter mockery to my breast—
For is an aching heart made calm,
Or writhing spirit lulled to rest,
Because, in ages long ago,
The martyrs winced and quivered so?—

XII.

'What if the stricken mother mourn
Because the darlings of her womb
Are from her ravished bosom torn,
And cradled in th' un pitying tomb ;—
Grieves she the less to lay them low
Since Rachel once lamented so?—

XIII.

'Though round the world, from east to west,
Each human heart, on shore or main,
My own among them, like the rest,
Should quiver to the selfsame pain,—
How could the universal woe
Make *me* the less unhappy so?—

XIV.

'Thrice worthier were the wish in me
To suffer more, instead of less,
Could all the groaning world go free,
Delivered through my own distress ;—
Yea, Heaven itself I would forgo,
To win it for my fellows so !'

XV.

Said he, 'O slow of heart, at last
The balm thou seekest thou shalt find ;
For if with all the strength thou hast
Thou suffer nobly for mankind,—
All pain which thou shalt undergo
Shall turn to bliss and rapture so.'

XVI.

'Alas!' I murmured, 'how can I,—
 So weak in wit, so poor in worth,
 So little fit to live or die,—
 Win sweetly down from Heaven to Earth
 A blessing on a friend or foe
 By virtue of my suffering so?'

XVII.

Then with a voice as when a song,
 Though ended, seems to echo still,
 He whispered, 'They who suffer long—
 And yet are patient—send a thrill
 Through every soul to whom they show
 The aureole of their sainthood so!—

XVIII.

'And, since no other balm avails
 To cool thy fever with a tear,
 Remember thou the Cross, the Nails,
 The Thorns, the Vinegar, the Spear,—
 And sweet shall be thy bitterest throe
 Because thy Master suffered so!'

XIX.

Then down I fell, a guilty thing,
 Before an Angel in disguise,
 Who, rustling each unfolding wing,
 Replumed it, radiant, for the skies,—
 Upon whose pinions, white as snow,
 I dared not look, they dazzled so!

THE THREE FATES

CLOTHO, *Birth.*
 LACHESIS, *Life.*
 ATROPOS, *Death.*

I.

SULLEN Sisters, churlish Trine,
 Hark to a complaint of mine!
 Never since the world began
 Were ye gentle unto man!
 Never till the world shall end
 Will ye be a mortal's friend!
 Ye have done me many a wrong—
 I will chide ye with a song!

—Will they harken to me? No!
They are deaf to human woe!

Would that by my bitter strain
I could make them wince with pain!—
Torturing them with every smart
Which they give the human heart!

Three such witches, so renowned,
Never yet were hanged or drowned!
One alone—of all the Three—
Shall go unrebuked of me!
Clotho is the only Fate
Whom a mortal may not hate.

II.

What is Clotho's occupation?
Listen to the strange narration:

Into every house on earth
Where a babe awaits his birth,
Clotho, when the time is full,
Enters with a creel of wool—
(Finer wool than ever grew
On a shepherd's youngest ewe—
Wool the finest ever known,
Carded by the Fates alone).

Happy is the house wherein
Clotho brings her wool to spin!—
For where Clotho enters not,
Lonely is a woman's lot!
Oh the empty heart and life
Of the yet unchilded wife!
So beside the marriage-bed
Clotho sits and spins a thread.

Sits and spins! No mortal eyes
See the distaff which she plies.

There she sits, and there she lingers,
Spinning with her filmy fingers
Till the strands shall number nine,
Each as strong as it is fine:
For so often hath she seen
Childbirth with its anguish keen
That in mercy Clotho tries
(Like an angel in disguise)

To assist the happy woe
And to quicken every throe—
Lest the pain should last too long:
Hence the thread is nine-fold strong.

Round the unborn babe she winds it,
And she bids him, as she binds it,
'Ncw, O baby, tug and strain!
Pull the cord with might and main!
Pull, O helpless little elf,
None can help thee but thyself!'

If the tiny unborn sprite
Tugs with all his main and might,
Clotho strengthens every strand—
Lest the babe, with foot or hand,
Struggle till by some mishap
All at once the cord should snap:
—For if Clotho's thread should break,
How the mother's heart would ache!

But the thread is like to hold:
Clotho learned her art of old—
Learned it at the Birth of Time!—
And she evermore since then
Hath been spinning threads for men!—
Spinning thus for ages long!—
And her threads have been so strong
That mankind, a mortal race,
Dying daily and apace,
Perish but to be renewed—
An immortal multitude!

Will the babe be born to-day?
Clotho—she alone—can say;
(But she answers none who ask!
Nought must interrupt her task).

So she spins from hour to hour
Till the travail grows in power;
Spins until the mother's moans
Sharpen into shrieks and groans;
Spins with pitiless delight
Till the pangs are at their height;
Spins at midnight, spins at morn,
Spins until the babe is born.

When the mother ends her throes,
Clotho drops the thread and goes—

Drops it, and with swift retreat
Leaves it short and incomplete.

Why should Clotho quit in haste?
She has little time to waste!
She from house to house must flit!
She by other beds must sit!
Cot and castle, hut and hall,
She must visit each and all.

But wherever she may go,
Spinning for the high or low,
All her work is fully done
When her thread is but begun:
Thus it is that Clotho spins—
Ending as the thread begins.

III.

If the thread, from this beginning,
Warrants now a further spinning,—
If the babe is born alive,
Lusty, bidding fair to thrive,
Uttering from his quivering throat
Hungry nature's bawling note,—
Lachesis in waiting stands
With her spindle in her hands!
—*She* must spin, in Clotho's stead,
The remainder of the thread.

Could we mortals catch a glimpse
Of the three immortal nymphs,
Lachesis would show her face
Puckered with a wry grimace
Wrinkling it from chin to brow
At the task that waits her now.

From the birth of every man
Down through all his earthly span
Till the close of his career,—
Day by day, and year by year,
Season out and season in,
Lachesis must spin and spin!—
For it is her busy lot
To provide him—jot by jot,
Piece by piece—from off her coil
All his term of life and toil.

Be the newly-cradled thing
Born to be a carl or king,
Born to be a wit or fool,—
Lachesis must take her spool,—
And thereafter, to and fro,
Wheresoever *he* may go,
She must follow in his tread,
Eking out to him his thread,—
Tracking him the world around
Like his shadow on the ground,—
Spinning for him like a slave
From his cradle to his grave!

What, O what, compared with these,
Were the toils of Hercules?

Fretful Lachesis demurs
At this thankless task of hers,—
Which no mortal loves her for:
—*All* the Fates indeed abhor
What they are compelled to do,—
And the whole uncanny crew
Always eagerly would shirk
(If they dared) their irksome work—
(Knowing well how they are hated):
But the Fates themselves are fated.
They may grumble, they may fret,
But to each her task is set:
She may scorn it—she may rue it—
Yet she is foredoomed to do it.

Nor can either of the Three
Toil awhile and then go free:
Nor can each divide and share
With the other two her care:
Each with lone and dumb endeavour
Plies her weary work for ever.

Lachesis, it is confest,
Drudges harder than the rest.
Why does she so oft indeed
Spin her thread with little heed?
Do her labours manifold
Make her prematurely old,
Till from having spun so much
She is reckless in her touch?
Is her sight becoming dim?
Is she womanish in whim

And (like all her sex) inclined
Fitfully to change her mind?

Lachesis deceives, forsooth,
Every mortal in his youth—
Till he always is misled,
Hoping for too good a thread.
He expects it to be long;
He believes it to be strong;
He desires it to be fine;—
But the spinner is malign!
She, with evil machinations,
Baffles all his expectations!

For she hates a happy man,
And will hurt him, if she can!
She has many a trick and cheat
To accomplish his defeat.

Thus, she lets her careless hands
Drop some necessary strands—
Till his thread, despite its length,
Fails to be of manly strength:
For he lacks a limb or lung:—
Or his nerves are half unstrung:—

Or his breath is short and scant
Till he has to gasp and pant
With perpetual strain and strife—
As if fighting for his life:—

Or the wool that she selects
Is a fibre whose defects
Render him in face and feature
A deformed and loathsome creature,
Till a wretch with such a thread
Rather wishes he were dead:—

Or her distaff, with its twirl,
Gives his brain itself a whirl—
Till his wit may all be gone,
While his thread keeps running on:—

Or, to spoil a mortal's skein
She will slight it, and complain,—
And with sulkiness of soul
Will refuse to spin the whole.

Palming off with tricky art
Just a scrimpy, niggard part—
Till her thread has now no more
All its noble length of yore.

She for Adam and his peers
Spun it out a thousand years :

Stingy of her wool, she then
Made it threescore years and ten :

Now she spins it oft so loose
As to be of little use—
So it ravel's out or frays
In a few and sickly days.

But although her wicked pleasure
Is to spin a scanty measure,
Cheating all for whom she spins,
Yet, in spite of all her sins,
Lachesis for once, I find,
Has to mortal man been kind :
She forbids him to foresee
What his length of thread shall be !
—*Who* would willingly foreknow
Just how far his thread will go ?
Lachesis—who knows it well—
Thinks it not a thing to tell !
—If such knowledge could be had,
It would make the world go mad !

IV.

Atropos—a cruel crone—
With a heart as hard as stone—
Crouches till the time draws nigh
When a man is doomed to die :
Then, regardless of his tears,
Grinding her relentless shears,
Ruthlessly she cuts his thread—
And at once the man is dead.

Is her duty quickly done ?
It is quickly re-begun :
She agen must grind her steel—
She has other deaths to deal !—
She must snip a thread (they say)
Every minute of the day !

Thus, the terror of the land,
 She of all the Triple Band
 Is the wickedest and worst
 And the Fate the most accurst.

Yet despite her murderous ways
 She deserves a meed of praise :
 What though fatal be her touch,
 She is dreaded overmuch !
 She can end a mortal's woe :
 Why should mortals fear her so ?
 Let her slash, or let her spare !
 As for me, I little care !

v.

O ye churlish Sisters Three,
 Spinners of a thread for me,
 I have now but little doubt
 That its length is nearly out.
 Clotho hath her portion spun :
 Lachesis will soon be done :
 Atropos is near, and waits.
 But my thread of life, ye Fates,
 (Since ye have, for many a day,
 Spun it in a grudging way,
 Out of poor and flimsy stuff)—
 Now at last is long enough !
 Cut it, cut it when ye will !—
 Why do ye keep spinning still ?

MARGERY'S BEADS.

I.

QUOTH I to pretty Margery More,
 'Where are the beads that once you wore ?'

II.

Gay Margery sighed, and dropt her head,
 And with a mournful murmur said :

III.

'I counted lovers,—one, two, three,—
 Each swearing he would die for me.



IV.

'I then devised a cruel test
To prove which lover loved me best :

V.

'I held my beads above a well,
And let them slip, and down they fell.

VI.

"Leap in!" cried I, "my pretty men,
And bring me up my beads agen!"

VII.

'I tried to guess which youth would dive,
And come up, panting, half alive!

VIII.

'But love makes every man a fool :
All three dove down into the pool!

IX.

'The pool was deep,—they all were drowned,
And never were their bodies found!

X.

'What maid was ever punished so ?'
Quoth Margery—smiling in her woe.

XI.

'Sad heart,' said I, 'be not so sore—
You yet may find three lovers more.'

XII.

'Alas!' quoth she, 'my bosom bleeds,
Not for my lovers, but my beads!'

—♦—

FLOWN.

Soliloquy of Saint Francis Xavier, sitting at the door of his cell
Montmartre, in Paris.

A. D. 1534.

O DOVE of Peace, thou long ago
Wert wont, on many a weary day,
To brood so sweetly on my woe
That half the pain was charmed away
Then rudely did I thee affright,
And roughly did I thee affray,—
Till thou wert driven to seek by flight
Some gentler friend with whom to stay :



But now I bend my straining sight
As twilight falls on bank and brae,—
To watch until thy pinions white
Gleam toward me through the evening grey.
The glow has faded from the west.
Fly downward from thy heavenly height,
To be agen my holy guest!
Where wilt thou on the earth alight
If not in a repentant breast?
Haste hither to a heart contrite,
To lull its restlessness to rest!
Come fold thy wings with me to-night,
And let my bosom be thy nest!



THE TWO ROADS.

I T was the parting of the ways :
I chose the left—a flowery maze,
When, all at once, to my affright,
A Stranger pointed to the right!

Was it a warning that he meant?
I heeded not, but on I went,
And journeyed madly, half the morn,
Until I trod upon a thorn!

Its dagger pierced me to the quick;
And drops of blood came fast and thick!
I sat and suffered for an hour,
And dried them with a balsam-flower.

Then up I leaped, and on I strode,
Still following the forbidden road,—
Through roses blowing or full-blown,—
And dashed my foot against a stone!

I must have fainted as I fell;
For there—how long I cannot tell—
I lay until, as from a dream,
I woke beside a purling stream:
Wherein I bathed my throbbing sore,—
And started on my way once more.

Then, through a shady sylvan scene,
Turfed softly with a tender green,



Sepulchred here below,—
 Say if the sweet white face,
 Hidden in this dark place,—
 Say if the hair of gold
 Buried amid thy mould,—
 Say, O thou Grave, her bed,—
 Is my love dead?
 O say, are the dead dead?

LONESOME.

PRISCILLA WAITING FOR JOHN ALDEN.

Plymouth Colony, A. D. 1623.

I.

I WANDER by the sparkling stream
 That shimmers in the morning sun,
 But all the glitter and the gleam
 Now mock me like an empty dream,—
 Through thinking of an absent one.

II.

I listen to the robin's note,
 But find no music in his lay,
 For though he hath a merry throat,
 And many lovers on him dote,
 Yet *my* true lover is away.

III.

I pluck the sweet and dewy rose,
 But, spite of all the dews of morn,
 No sweetness in a bud that blows
 Is left when my true lover goes,—
 Whose going leaves my heart forlorn.

IV.

I weary of the clouds that fly,
 I weary of the winds that roar,
 I weary of the earth and sky,
 I weary of my own sad sigh,—
 Till my true lover comes once more!

THOU AND I :

A LYRIC OF LOVE-LIFE.

PROEM.

*G*O, little book, a pilgrim through the land,
And beg a minstrel's welcome here and there ;
But be content, however thou shalt fare,—
In cottage lowly, or in castle grand!
—And if, of those who take thee by the hand,
Some bid thee enter where the hearth is bare,—
Where love is slain,—where grief hath wrought
despair,—
Thou, too, the lore of pain dost understand!
Thou, too, hast agonized when love was dead!
Where sorrow dwelleth, there dost thou belong!
Thou art not alien where a tear is shed!
So they who love and weep may heed thy song—
A song of sorrow not too sadly sung.
—What bard can sing, except his heart be wrung?

THOU AND I.

I.

'THOU and I!'
Cried he, an urchin gay,
'Let us go forth to play,
Just we ourselves, we twain!'

Then, to the rock-bound main,
Along the billow-beaten strand,
Amid the flying spray,
He led her by her tiny hand;—
And, just above the water's reach,
They sat together on the beach,
And piled the shells and sand
Into a palace grand.

They built it like Aladdin's tower—
Begun and finished in an hour!

The builders thought the building
A marvel to behold,
For Fancy gave it gilding
More golden than of gold!
The Caliphs of the days of old
Held never such a royal court
As did those children in their sport!

'I now am King!' cried he;
'And I am Queen!' said she.

Then over land and sea
They held imperial sway
One livelong day:—
A happy day whose sun
Went down on love begun
And twain made one!

II.

'Thou and I!'
Said he, in graver tone,—
Man-grown,—
Thick-bearded,—at her side;
A bridegroom by his bride;
The twain more royal than before,
Though King and Queen no more.

Then forth from the cathedral-door
They stept on flowery ground,

And gazed around,—
From south to north,—
From east to west,—
In sweet bewilderment profound
At which of all the roads seemed best ;
Till, choosing one that led
They knew not where,
The never-parting pair,—
Brave man, fair wife,—
Began, with joint and jocund tread,
Their pilgrimage of life.

And though the path was never straight,
But ever winding,
And hard of finding,—
Yet on they went, with hearts elate ;
For Hope is not afraid of Fate.

'Dear love,' said he, 'the world is wide,
But howsoever wide it be,
It hath no land nor sea
To sunder thee and me :
So follow thou where I shall guide :

'Beyond the mountains is a dreamy spot,—
A bosky dell,
With many a shepherd's lowly cot :
Arcadia, whereof poets tell :—

'A land where all is well ;
Where they who tarry sorrow not ;
Where happiness is each one's lot ;—
For all the realm is guarded by a spell
Beneath whose magic charm
No creatures dwell
That hurt or harm :—

'No serpents in the grasses creep ;
No wolves prowl round the sheep ;
No hungry hawks molest
The pendulous, wind-blown nest
Wherein the oriole sways and swings ;
No scorpion stings ;
No thorn is rapier to the rose ;
No deadly nightshade grows ;—
Nor wilt thou there—
In roaming hill or plain—
Need to beware
The troublous herb of Trebizond
Whereof the bee (too fond)

Makes honey maddening to the brain ;—
 Nor wilt thou meet
 The ominous mistletoe,
 That tree of woe
 Which the Blind Thrower flings
 At Balder, prince of kings,
 To end his reign ;—
 Nor wilt thou pluck, in some unguarded hour,
 A poisonous flower,
 Nor bud of any kind of bane,
 To sting thy soft white hand, my sweet ;—
 Nor wilt thou tread a flint or shard,
 To cut thy tender feet ;
 But safely shalt thou pass
 Through mosses and lamb-nibbled grass—
 Through shady glen and leafy lane
 Where all the rocks, however hard,
 Are piteous, as when Edda's bard
 Saw every pebble weep for Balder slain'.
 'And though in other lands elsewhere
 The earth, that men call fair,

¹ In the Scandinavian mythology, Balder (who is somewhat analogous to the Greek Apollo) was the god of sunshine and summer. His mother, to guard his life against all possible enemies, exacted from all things in Nature, both animate and inanimate, an oath that they would be friendly to Balder ; pledging themselves that he should receive no harm from any source whatever—whether from fire, water, beast, bird, stone, or bush. All these took the oath, except only the mistletoe—a plant which was accidentally overlooked. Afterwards, when nothing (as was supposed) could kill or hurt Balder, it became a favourite amusement of the gods to hurl various of these oath-bound missiles at their smiling favourite, in order to see them fall harmless at his feet.

In the midst of this pastime, Loki (or the Spirit of Evil) broke off a mistletoe-bough and carried it to Höder (the god of winter)—who, being blind, had not joined in the sport.

'Why do you not throw something at Balder?' asked Loki. 'Because,' replied Höder, 'I cannot see ; and besides, I have nothing to throw.'

Loki then craftily put the unsworn mistletoe into Höder's hands, and guiding the blind god's uplifted arm, enabled him to take straight aim. The fateful branch violently struck Balder, who fell dead at the blow.

After Balder's death, the Norns (or Fates) promised that if all created things would join in weeping for his untimely end, he should be restored to life and the world. All Nature tenderly complied with this request. Tears were shed by rocks, trees, birds, beasts, men, gnomes, and spirits—by every creature save one—an ogress named Thok, who was Loki in disguise.

This universal lamentation of Nature for the downfall of Balder (that is to say, for the extinguishment of summer) is aptly chronicled in a common expression in use among the Icelanders ; who, when the ground in the early autumn begins to be beaded with chilly dew, say—'The stones are weeping for Balder's death.'

Hath even in its greenness
 Some mildew, some uncleanness,—
 Yet in Arcadia's fairer zone
 No blasting blight is known;
 Nor fades a blossom when it once hath blown;
 Nor has the Vale a wilderness or waste,—
 Like wild Sahara;
 Nor font of bitter taste,—
 Like Marah;
 Nor bog Serbonian¹;
 Nor *ignis fatuus* of the fen,
 To tempt unwary men;
 Nor vapour Acheronian²;
 Nor charnel odour foul;
 Nor jackal's mournful howl;
 Nor outcry of the owl!

'For, O my bonny bride!
 To that half-earthly and half-heavenly seat
 There comes (as to Endymion's dale)
 No snow, nor hail,
 Nor rain, nor sleet,
 Nor wind—except the wooing gale
 That lulled and lullabied
 And kist Endymion³—till he died;
 Or only feigned to die, instead,—
 Too godlike to be dead;
 Asleep in love's sweet swoon, to wake
 For pale Selené's sake
 Who watched above him, open-eyed:

'A land without a winter's day,
 But where the year is always May,

¹ Plutarch in his life of Antony says:—'The Serbonian marsh (which the Egyptians call Typhon's breathing-hole) is, in all probability, water left behind by, or making its way from, the Red Sea; which is here [i. e. near Pelusium] divided from the Mediterranean by a narrow isthmus.'

Milton, in the second book of *Paradise Lost*, locates the famous marsh thus:

'A gulf, profound as that Serbonian bog
 Betwixt Damiatra and Mount Casius old.'

² Acheron, as a river of Hades, may be supposed to have engendered exhalations similar to those which Lucretius assigns to Lake Avernus. Thus, *De Rerum Natura*, lib. vi. 820: 'The regions of Avernus send up, from beneath, a vapour destructive to birds—a vapour in such abundance as to poison the whole atmosphere.'

³ The myth of the beautiful youth Endymion, who slept a long sleep in a secluded glen on the side (or top) of Mount Latmos, where he was watched over by Selené, has received many interpretations: one of which is, that Endymion was the sun, and Selené the moon.

And where, O love, the lovely skies
Are blue as *thy* blue eyes,—
But not so tearless!—for (they say)
Those heavens, unwracked by thunderous storm,
Unswapt by rainy wind,
Drip iris-coloured dews—
Outgleaming all the pearls of Orm¹,
Outflashing all the gems of Ind²:
'Not dews that dry and disappear—
Like these that wet the grasses here,—
For there, in that Arcadian weather
Neither the dog-star, nor the sun, nor moon,
Nor all together,—
At midnight or at noon,—
Can suck, or drink, or dry, or waste away
A single dew-drop of those blessed meads
Whither, O love, our journey leads!
Those dews are deathless! There, on plain and hill
And pebbly shore,
They sparkle evermore!—
Immortal!—like the dripping ooze
Of Helicon's twin-watered fount,—
Or like the drops that fill
Castalia's naïad-haunted rill,
Once loved of every muse—
Ere yet the truant Muses fled:
'For, darling, I have heard it said
That now the Muses dwell—
Not as they did in days of yore,
Each in her chilly nook
Upon the high Parnassian Mount—
But that their humbler hiding-place instead
Is now the low Arcadian Vale,
Wherein, according to the tale,
(O sad to tell!)
They climb no more,
Nor drink from mountain-springs,—
But from the valley-brook.
'And foolish folk suppose them to be dead!—
But no, I say!—
The Muses are not mortal things—
To moulder—or decay—
Or pass away—

^{1, 2} See the opening of the second book of *Paradise Lost*, thus:

'High on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormus or of Ind.'

Or suffer ban—
 For though they be not seen to-day,
 Yet they are only hid,—
 Hid for a little season,
 And I can guess the reason—
 (The times are not propitious for them now!)
 But I avow
 That by and by,
 Upon the coming of the Golden Year
 (Which slowly, slowly, slowly draweth near!)
 The Muses, each and all, will re-appear!—
 For how or why
 Should any one of the Parnassian Nine,
 Being ethereal and divine,
 Consent to die?
 Some of the train
 Must still remain,
 Or Pan would blow his pipe in vain:
 Yet in Arcadia, goat-foot Pan—
 Down to this very hour—
 Pipes in his same old way—
 And with his same old power—
 Blowing his antique reed
 With such a skill indeed
 That all the Muses must inspire his strain:
 —Else he would lack for wit:
 —So let the Muses quit
 (If so they will)
 Their snow-clad hill,
 And let them leave all Helicon behind them,—
 Yet when we reach Arcadia we shall find them!

 'For there, my love (as I have heard),
 Each sound with which the air is stirred,
 Each note, though warbled, hummed, or whirled,
 Of singing bird,
 Or buzzing bee,
 Or the cicada's shriller key,
 Or cattle lowing,
 Or wild wind blowing,—
 All take their wondrous tunes
 From those immortal runes
 Which Odin uttered whilst He hung
 For nine days long
 Upon the Great Ash Tree¹—

¹ The world, with all its mysteries of life, death, and destiny—in other words, the whole problem which the universe presents to the mind of man—

Bound to its world-wide boughs—
 Till, as His agony grew strong,
 And as His blood dript from His brows,
 He fashioned every kind of song
 To be thereafter sung
 By every living thing that hath a tongue!—
 Songs for the birds in flight,
 Songs for the winds upon the mountain-height,
 Songs for the day, songs for the night,
 Songs which all Nature's voices evermore repeat
 With ever new delight:
 For Odin's pangs were bitter: so His songs are sweet.

'And fortunate, dear love, I deem
 Ourselves shall be, when we shall hear
 Those songs supernal and supreme,—
 Heard never (so it would appear)
 In our gross atmosphere,—
 But in Arcadia (as would seem)
 Heard oft,—
 For there the air is soft;
 And there the noisy, rude,
 And boisterous mirth
 Of rougher mortals in the outer earth
 Can nevermore intrude;
 And there the shepherds (when they meet
 For love-talk) use a tone
 More gentle than is elsewhere known;
 A speech like music—gay and clear—
 Yet falling lightlier on the ear
 Than when, by summer's heat,
 The lute is mellowed and unstrung—
 Not sounding, only sighing;
 Or when the lark,—aloft and out of sight,—
 Sings flying;
 Or when, at dead of night,

is boldly imaged by the Scandinavian poets in the form of a gigantic Ash Tree called *Ygdrasil*; whose roots strike down to the very bottom of the earth, and whose branches reach up to the very top of heaven. On this majestic tree, the god Odin (who ranked next after the original Creator of all things) voluntarily hung for nine days—having first pierced Himself with a spear, in order that with sensibilities keenly alive, and through sufferings painfully protracted, He might hear the secrets of Nature, and learn and teach their subtle meanings. When He had thus mastered this mystical lore, He re-uttered it to mankind in rhythmic measures called *runes*: hence all the sounds in the world—whether of winds, waters, birds, or insects—together also with man's minstrelsy of harp and voice—are all traced to a divine origin, and are but repetitions or re-echoes of Odin's runes, which He uttered while hanging on the Great Ash Tree.

Leaves rustle which the dews are sprinkling ;
Or when Titania's bells
(The tiniest ever swung)
Are suddenly set tinkling
To call the fairies from afar
To Candahar¹.

'But, O sweet love, these words of mine
Are harsh and grating,
And fail in the relating
How those Arcadian notes combine,—
Now sinking, and now swelling,—
With sweetness so excelling
That *I*, to tell of it, would need (in telling)
A voice as sweet as *thine*!—

'A land, dear love, of perfect peace!—
For as when Orpheus smote his shell,—
The beasts, though dabbled all with gore,
No longer one another tore,
(But to the strain entrancing
That set them dancing
The lion did with leopard leap
And did a concord keep)—
So, in Arcadia, we shall find
That all the shepherds there
Are harmless as their sheep;—
For there, those wrangling passions, which elsewhere
Are hard to quell,
Yield to the spell
Of that enchanted place—
And all are tamed to gentle grace.

'Now, darling, to that green immortal dell
Its ancient goddess, still divine,
Our Mother Mighty,
Great Aphrodite,
Bids every bride and groom
(Ere yet their love be cold)
Go make a pilgrimage, as lovers did of old,—
With homage due,—
There to renew
The ancient worship of her primal shrine;—
A still-unruined shrine—part bronze, part gold,
Part ivory;—and it stands

¹ The frequent mention of this geographical name in modern military dispatches somewhat rudely disturbs the old association which Thevenot refers to when he says, 'There is a part of Candahar called Peria, or *Fairyland*.'

Just midway of the plain ;—
 And thither, ever, from all lands,
 Go shepherdess and swain,
 And every happy pair
 Just newly wedded ;—to entwine
 Our Mighty Mother's image there
 With columbine,
 And with red roses, and white lilies,
 And yellow daffodillies,
 And sacred ivy-vine :—

'That so Love's altar, ever newly-decked,
 May suffer no neglect,
 Nor wedlock prove in vain ;
 That bonded hearts may beat
 With ever happy heat,
 And find their bondage to be always sweet ;
 That nevermore like sorrowing Clité¹,
 Or jealous Amphitrité²,
 Or Ariadné, moaning by the main,
 Shall any woman pine
 With love-sick pain,
 Nor sigh through many a vigil long
 For love that came and went ;
 Nor grieve at passion's false intent ;
 Nor bear the world's disdain,
 Nor self-reproach, nor mutual wrong ;
 For troth, re-plighted at that primal altar,
 Shall last life-long ;
 Faith shall continue ever strong ;
 Duty shall never fail nor falter ;
 Love shall have nothing to repent ;—
 Pride nothing to resent ;
 And golden days in peace be spent,
 And silvery nights
 Bring pure delights !—

'A land, dear heart, of heart's content ;
 Where eyes whose tears once fell
 Have not a woe to weep ;
 Where neither murmur nor lament,

¹ Clité, a daughter of the sea, was in love with Apollo, god of the sun ; but as the god's affections were bestowed elsewhere, the disappointed maiden yearned after him with hopeless grief ; and she is symbolized by the sunflower, whose face follows the sun across the sky.

² Amphitrité, wife of Neptune, grew jealous of her lord's love for Scylla, and to revenge herself on her rival, threw a handful of magic herbs into the fountain where Scylla bathed, which fretted the water, and transformed the beautiful and offending bather into a monster.

Nor discord nor dissent,
 Nor sob nor sigh,
 Disturbs the halcyon spell,—
 But life and love are sweetly blent,
 Harmonious as a marriage-bell.

'And look, my love, for now—
 To guess from what the bards all say
 (And *who* can know so well as they?)
 The Valley seems to lie
 Not far away but nigh—
 Just under yonder mountain's brow—
 Where yonder white doves fly.
 So let us, thou and I,
 Go thither and there dwell.'

—Then, ere as yet the sun was high,
 Forth hastening over bank and brae,
 Albeit uncertain of the way,
 But simply toward Arcadia¹ bent,—
 The lovers thither wandering went
 To pitch their tent.

III.

'Thou and I!'
 Agen to her quoth he.
 'Come sit, my love, with me
 Beneath this mulberry tree,
 And watch our children romp and play.

'How wild they are, and gay!
 How light and free!
 O blessed is the children's glee!
 Let them enjoy it while they may—
 It cannot last—it will not stay!

'Look, darling, look!
 Now, ready for the race

¹ The original and real Arcadia (that is, the central region of the Peloponnesus) is far from justifying the ideal character with which the Roman poets and their successors have always invested it; for it neither was, nor is, a paradise of shepherds—except in imagination. Instead of a region of lush meadows and blooming pasturage, Mitford calls it 'a cluster of mountains.' Grote says, 'it is high and bleak.' Modern tourists familiarly style it 'the Switzerland of Greece.' But however warlike or mercenary may have been the Arcadians of Strabo's day,—and however wild and desolate their country is now,—nevertheless the poetic fancy of the world will probably always cherish Arcadia as the spot where Hermes invented the lyre; where Pan gave to the shepherds their syrinx or pipe; and where a pastoral and musical people are for ever chanting of love and peace.

With eager feet and glowing face—
They dash away—
And leap and bound
Like hare and hound,
And hunt each other round and round ;—
Now, weary of the chase,
The bonny band
All panting stand ;—
And now, like busy elves,
Each digs and delves
And builds of clay
A palace as we did ourselves,—
On that far-off and happy day
Beside the rock-bound sea !

'O thou and I, once young as they,
How now is life with thee and me ?
When first we started forth together,
The morning dews were on the heather ;
But now the lark has done his tune ;
The dial vergeth to the noon ;
And yet, despite our breezy weather,
The midday sun fatigues us soon,—
Fatigues us more than when we crossed
Those mountains where our way we lost !
So let us rest a little now.

'I just discover on thy brow
An ornament so passing fair
That not the like did Venus wear,
A single thread of silver hair !—
As silvery as if finger-frayed
Or wind-plucked from Diana's braid ;
Yea, silvery more than silver bright,—
As if, at very zenith-height
Apollo's chariot in its flight
Had crossed, at noon, the orb of night,
And jarred its rays and loosened down
Upon thy sunlit tresses brown
A moonbeam also for a crown !

'Dear wife, there is a rhyme that sings
How Time, with the keen Scythe he swings,
Cuts down all living things ;
But false is every fable
That vainly so pretends —
For Time is never able,
Though keen the blade he wieldeth,

To pierce what honour shieldeth,
 Or wound what faith defends :
 His powerful stroke
 May fell the century oak,
 But faithful love he cannot kill —
 Assault it as he will.

'O sweet companion, tried and true!
 There is a love that soon or late
 May turn to anger, or to hate,
 Until the heart unmates its mate
 And cuts the cord in two :
 But thou and I, who loved of yore,
 Love on for ever, as before, —
 Not less and less, but more and more.

'So though we sought but never found
 The fabled and enchanted ground
 Where bloom Arcadia's happy bowers,
 Yet see what pleasant fruits and flowers
 Grow in this garden here of ours !

'Our orchard is not grand, —
 And yet in all the land
 What fairer apples can there be
 Than ripen here, my love, for thee ?
 They are as round and splendid
 As those that Idun tended,
 Which in that Hyperborean clime,
 Where once the gods grew old before their time,
 The goddess with her health-bestowing hand¹
 Fed to the feeble, hoary-bearded band
 Till every wasted god regained his youth and prime.

'What purpler grapes have ever blushed
 Than ours — just ready to be crushed ?
 They have as lush a look
 As if they grew by Eshcol's brook²,

¹ The Northman's goddess Idun (or Iduna) personated the springtime. During the long Norwegian winter, the gods (namely, the vital powers of Nature) languished and declined; and had it not been for the care with which Idun (or the ever-recurring spring) revived and refreshed their wasted energy, they would have perished.

The pretty story that, on one occasion, Idun and her apples were stolen and carried away, and that the gods were thereby left to grow wrinkled and hoary until she and her fruits could be found and brought back, is told with great vivacity in the national literature of the Icelanders. See the Second Edda.

² The grapes of Eshcol are, to this day, the wonder of the vineyards of Palestine; and Dr. Tristram says: 'Clusters weighing ten or twelve pounds

Or ripened red in serried ranks
 On old Engeddi's¹ terraced banks,
 Or burst and bled
 Beneath the tread
 Of Judah's wine-press², flowing still
 On ancient Zion's vine-clad hill,
 Whose crimson clusters
 Hold all the lustres
 Of all the summer suns that shine
 To flush the wine.

'What whiter lilies ever blow
 Than here we train?—white as the whitest thing
 Whereof a bard can sing!—
 White as Olympian snow!—
 White as the sacred robe of Judah's king!—
 White as the crested waves that whiten
 When blown by trumpet of the Triton!—
 Or white as Jove's white wing
 When he, a swan in Leda's arms,
 Outblanched their charms!

'What myrtles yield a sweeter bloom
 Than thou and I have here entwined?—
 None since that doleful day of doom
 When (as the Arab maids relate)
 The exiled Adam and his mate
 Bore with them, out of Eden's gate,
 A myrtle-flower³, to keep in mind
 The sweetness they had left behind.

'So, as for thee and me, what though
 (As in the sacred Hebrew tale⁴)

have been gathered. The spies doubtless bore the clusters between them on a staff. With judicious pruning, bunches weighing nearly twenty pounds can be produced. Not only are the *bunches* remarkable for their weight, but the *individual grape* attains a size rarely reached elsewhere.'

¹ Unlike the vineyards of Eshcol, those of Engeddi are now extinct.—or nothing but the terraces remain.

² The ancient richness of Judaea, in the production of wine, is attested in Genesis xlix. 11: 'Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine, he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes.'

³ It is a tradition in Medina (the home of Mahomet) that when Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise, the guilty pair were allowed to carry with them but a single flower as a souvenir of the Happy Garden; and this flower was the myrtle.

⁴ Genesis xl. *et seq.*

The Nile forget to overflow,
And Egypt's harvests fail?
Yet still, of all our sunny fields,
Not one but yields
A laden wain
Of golden grain
To threshing-floor and flail!
For all the dews of night and morn
Are garnered in our corn,
And all the showers that come and pass
Are treasured in our grass.

'Let Famine, wan and pale,
Thin-visaged and forlorn,
Sit wasting where she will:
But here is Plenty's Horn,
Which as of old, so still,
She empties but to fill,
And fills to empty, each in turn,
Until,
Like Neptune's Urn,
Through which the endless rivers roared,
It ever full is stored,
Yet ever forth is poured,
With ever-emptying, never-emptied hoard.

'So, for th' abundance on our board
We praise the Lord.

'Or, if the skies bring hurricanes,
Till oak and vine uprooted lie,
And harvests mildew in the rains,
And fig and olive fail and die,—
Who is it murmurs or complains?

'It is not thou—it is not I.
For God Who takes, like God Who gives,
Is God the same—
All glory to His name!
So if He gives, or if He takes,
It still is for our sakes.

'From the high Heaven in which He lives,
To the low Earth on which He reigns,
He to the sons of men ordains
That *ills* (as mortals call them)
Shall evermore befall them.

'For God in His eternal plan
Gives Good and Evil unto Man,—

No less of evil than of good :
Strange mystery, never understood !
But if the wind that bloweth
So cometh and so goeth
That whence or whither no man knoweth,
Who then shall understand
The counsel dark, the purpose dim,
And all the secret ways of Him
Who holds the winds within His hand ?

'Of all the gifts that Heaven bestoweth,
The rod of God's affliction
Is man's best benediction.

'If first there cometh laughter—
Or jest—or jubilation,—
Then, swiftly after,
God sendeth lamentation !

'Good is not good, if single ;
So good and evil intermingle.
The gold hath need of the alloy.
Is Heaven a place of perfect joy ?
Not if, of joys, it lacks the chief—
The joy of grief.

'Had Heaven to such an earth as this
Decreed a perfect bliss,
Then men, unmanned by such a scheme,
Would say, "Now we will doze and dream
And indolently wait
While bounteous Heaven, for each of us, fulfilleth
A happy fate."

'Instead whereof, Heaven willeth
That man shall labour long and late,—
With struggle, sweat, and groan ;
For not a field he tilleth
Is his to reap except as he hath sown.

'O gentle wife,
The world is full of woe and sin—
Of blood and strife :
Fresh griefs invade it day by day :
How dare they thus intrude therein ?
By what strange warrant tarry they ?
For how could miseries come or stay
Were Heaven to will them once away ?

'If God be God,
And if there be no God but He,—

Then how—against His high decree—
Could such things be?
Or how, upon the Cassia-tree,
Could cankers grow?
Or locusts gnaw the lily-leaf?
Or how could rotting rust
Despoil the harvest-sheaf
While Hunger crieth for a crust?
Or how could Plague stalk to and fro,
Or graves be dug, and hearts laid low?

‘And yet, dear love, men little know,
While they to Heaven are suing
For all the blessings of the blest,
That oft the miseries they are ruing
Are God’s own doing,
Who knoweth best.
Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?
Not only are His judgements just
But also kind:
Or if indeed, to our too narrow sight
They seem not so,
We take an erring view,
For we are worse than blind—
We see as moles and earthworms do—
Without a single ray of heavenly light:

‘So what the Heavenly Will
Bestows as good we take as ill.

‘Should the great Giver give us grief and woe
(As at some future day
He in His mercy may)
We shall be sure that still,
Whatever drops of sorrow flow,
Whatever spear into the soul is thrust,
Whatever fiery bolt the bosom sears
With heat unquenchable by tears,—
Whatever may befall,—
God’s love is in it all.

‘God’s *love*, I say,—
But not His *peace*:
His love—He gives us day by day:
His peace—He often holdeth back,
As if to keep us on the rack!

‘For it is Heaven’s behest
That every heaving human breast,

Instead of finding rest,
Shall thrill with joys—shall throb with aches—
Until it glows—until it breaks ;—
That good and ill—that weal and woe—
Like equal forces, foe to foe—
Shall in the bosom strive and strain,
Each its own empire to maintain,
Till, wearied, panting, out of breath,
The fainting heart at last shall feel,—
Whichever triumphs, woe or weal,—
Be fortune high, or fortune low,
It matters not how goes the strife
Since Love, and Love alone, is Life.
“For I am fickle,” Fortune saith,
“But Love is faithful unto death.”

‘In all our losses, all our gains,
In all our pleasures, all our pains,
The life of life is,—Love remains.

‘In every change from good to ill,—
If love continue still,
Let happen then what will !
Come wildest storm that ever burst !
Let the tornado blow !
Come crash and overthrow !
Let fate, accurst,
Fulfil its worst,—
Heaven’s bolt without Heaven’s bow !
Be all our treasures scattered wide,—
Till joy, and pride,—
And hope, and all beside
Be to the wild winds strown,—
All tempest-blown
To coasts unknown,—
All swept beyond recall,—
All, all save love alone,—
Yet love alone is all in all !

‘If love abide,
If love endure,—
Strong through its sufferings bravely borne,
And through its chastening sorrows, pure,—
O then, whatever other precious thing
Should prove unstable—insecure—
Or like an Emperor’s crown or signet-ring
Which we have found in sleep—
Not meant for us to keep ;

Whatever cup of pleasure—
 Filled high, to overmeasure—
 Be spilled and wasted
 Ere it be tasted;
 Whatever plume the Fates have shorn
 From Fortune's crest;
 Whatever be the prize—the treasure
 Whereof our souls are dispossessed;—
 Whoso hath love can then lose all the rest
 And still be blest!

'Love, be it homeless and forlorn;
 Love, be it beggared, tattered, torn;
 Love, be it robbed by fate
 Of all its fair estate
 Till nought remains its own;—
 No pillow for its head
 Except a stone,—
 Whereon, from night till morn,
 Its temples beat
 With fever heat;
 No sandals for its feet,—
 Till, naked to the thorn,
 The trail they tread
 Be tinged blood-red;
 No pilgrim's scallop-shell,—
 Nor wayside well
 Wherein to dip
 To cool its parching lip;
 No wild-bees' honey sweet,—
 But only bitter bread to eat,
 With wine of gall;—
 Yet love still changes not; for, I repeat,
 O bonnie bride, O gentle dame,
 Love ever is the same—the same—the same!

'Love, even all distraught,
 Love, stript of all things,—love, bereft
 Till only its own self is left,—
 Love, faithful still,
 And fearing nought,
 Though losing all,—
 Love, love,—which no despair can kill,
 Nor misery can appal,—
 Love from its deepest depth of woe shall call,
 And shall of Heaven a boon implore;
 And what shall be Love's prayer?

'No plea of empty palms
 For beggar's alms!—
 No golden dross
 For recompense of loss!—
 No sheltering hut nor hall!—
 No goodly heritage, no stock nor store,
 No shred of all it had before
 Save only its own touch and thrill
 To work its wondrous will
 And knit two hearts together still,
 Twain one for evermore!

'O winsome wife, we soon shall know,—
 As onward into life we go,—
 There is no power on Earth below,
 No power in Heaven above,
 No power of all the powers of Hell,
 Where all the powerful passions dwell,—
 No power to do, no power to bear,
 In bliss, in anguish, in despair,—
 No power omnipotent as love.

'O marvellous was the might sublime
 Which mighty minstrels chanted of
 In many a high heroic rhyme
 Of giants of the olden time!—

'They sang how, all distained with grime,
 Each panting Argonaut¹,
 When home the Golden Fleece was brought—
 In sweaty phalanx, all as one,
 On many groaning shoulders bore
 Their huge ship up the shore.

'They sang how writhingly were wrought
 The twelve great toils²,—
 The weariest ever done
 Beneath th' unpitying sun.

'They sang how fuming was the fret
 Of him who, in the viewless net³,

¹ In Pindar's fourth Pythian ode, he mentions that the Argonauts carried their ship on their shoulders, for twelve successive days, over the desert sands of Libya.

² The myth of Hercules and his dozen tasks is thus interpreted by Cox. 'Hercules is the toiling sun, labouring for the benefit of others, not his own. His toils are variations on the story of the great conflict which Indra wages against Vitra, the demon of darkness.'

³ The incident of the invisible yet infrangible net which the jealous Vulcan wrought, in order to ensnare in it the unsuspecting lovers, Mars and Venus, is told in the eighth book of the *Odyssey*.

Against the unseen coils--
 (More filmy than the spider's woof,
 And yet more fracture-proof
 Than brazen chain)—
 Tugged, godlike, yet in vain.

'They sang how sinewy was the strain
 Of him who evermore uprolled
 Th' enchanted stone¹ that slipped his hold
 And bounded back from hill to plain
 To be upheaved agen with might and main.

'Yea, many a song they sang beside,
 How the all-valiant gods, in pride,
 With one another vied ;—

'How naked Vulcan, clad with smoke,
 And fierce with jealous ire,
 His ringing anvil beat
 With such a spark-enkindling stroke
 That just his hammer's heat
 Had nearly set the earth on fire :
 How Jove in wrath the Titans² hurled
 Down-whizzing to the lower world ;
 How Ossa was on Pelion flung³ ;
 How Arthur's sword was three times swung⁴ ;
 How Charlemagne's battle-brand⁵,
 Which he alone could hold,

¹ If every fable in the Greek mythology is but a poetic representation of some phenomenon of Nature, then the repetitious labours of Sisyphus with his Stone may be taken as another of the many pictures of the daily rising and setting of the sun,—to rise and set agen.

² The Titanomachia, or contest of Jupiter with the Titans, took place in Thessaly ;—the Titans occupying Mount Orthrys ; and Jupiter, Mount Olympus. The contest lasted ten years ; at the end of which time the Titans were hurled into Tartarus.

³ In the war between the Giants and the Gods, the Giants piled Mount Ossa upon Mount Pelion, in the vain hope thereby to scale Mount Olympus. Seen from the south, Ossa and Pelion look as if one mountain rested on the other. There is a local tradition that both mountains were originally one, and were rent apart by an earthquake.

⁴ In the *Idylls of the King*, after King Arthur's sword Excalibur was cast forth toward the lake,

—'ere he dipped the surface, rose an arm
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
 And caught him by the hilt and brandished him
 Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

⁵ The legend that Charlemagne bore a sword so huge and heavy that no other warrior could wield it, is somewhat dwarfed of its heroic proportions by the moderate-sized weapon now exhibited in the Louvre, purporting to have belonged to that monarch.

Too ponderous for another's hand,
Flashed lightnings through the land;
How Lion Heart in fury fought
With Saladin the bold;—

'The minstrels sang and sang agen,
Of mighty gods, of mighty men,
Of giants in the days of old,
Of heroes of immortal mould,
Till all the earth with echoes rang,—
So well they sang!

'But all this marvellous might was nought,
In act or thought,
Compared with Love, when comes the hour
To prove its superhuman power.

'Though all the Furies be its foes,
And buffet it with all the blows
That rained on Hector's helmet,
They could not overwhelm it!

'O Earth! O Heaven! Behold!
Of all the powers that are, or seem,
In fact or dream,
Love is supreme!

'No mortal breath,
No lip that uttereth speech or song,
No word that any poet saith,
No urn or marble after death,
No art, however long,
No tongue of time hath ever told
The might of love, how manifold,—
The strength of love, how strong!

'Love, strong as Samson at the gates,—
Love, stronger than the Triple Fates,
Love, strongest of the strong,—in patience waits,
Like Atlas, long,—until at length,
With mighty load, yet mightier strength,—
It lifts this fallen world on high,
And holds it in the upper sky
For Heaven's own air to purify!

'Love, fiercer far
Than blazing flame of sun or star,
Is that immortal fire,
The soul's supreme desire,

Th' eternal heat
That gives the heart its perfect beat,
And makes this life of ours complete!

'So thou and I, my sweet,
Sit at Love's feet!'

—The matron listened, glowed and smiled;
Then caught and kissed each romping child.

IV.

'Thou and I!'
The old man said,—four-score,
Snow-crowned, and form erect no more.
'Let us to Him Whom we adore
Give thanks and praise!—
For He Who lengtheneth out our days
Hath given us twain our mortal measure
Of all the needful toil and strife—
Of all the needful peace and pleasure—
Which they who live call life!

'Our stalwart sons are scattered far,—
All following fortune's flying star,
That leads the brave where honours are!
Our gentler birds have softer flown
Each with her mate through tranquil skies,
Each to her nest in quiet shades,—
Till now, of all those mated maids,
Each daughter is a matron grown,
Each mothering daughters of her own.

'The heart alone
Is woman's throne,—
A shaken throne of hopes and fears;
Yet, as among the twinkling spheres
The star, most fixt, most trembles,—lo!
A woman's heart is even so:
The more it quivers in her breast,
The deeper its foundations rest.

'What honours shall a woman prize?
In *love* her queenly glory lies,—
Till in her children's princely eyes,
And in their father's kingly worth,
She sums the empire of the earth.

'But now, dear heart, to thee and me
What more of honour can there be?

What laurel-wreath, what garland grand,
 Can thou or I
 Snatch with a palsied hand?
 Our time for struggle has passed by:
 For us, the almond-tree
 Doth flourish now¹:
 Let others triumph as they may,
 And wear their garlands gay
 Of olive, oak, or bay²:
 For us, our crown of glory is, instead,
 The hoary head³.

'Our threescore years and ten
 That measure life to mortal men
 Have lingered to a longer length
 By reason of our strength⁴;
 Yet, like a tale that hath been told,
 They all have passed, and now, behold!
 We verily are old;—

'Yea, old like Abraham when he went
 With head down bent
 And mantle rent,
 In dole for her who lay in death,
 And to the Sons of Heth
 The silver shekels gave
 For Mamré's gloomy cave
 To be her grave⁵;

'Or, older still, like him
 Who, feeble not of limb,
 With eyes not dim,
 Upclomb with staff in hand
 To where Mount Nebo cleft the sky,
 And looked and saw the Promised Land
 (Forbidden him from on high⁶),
 Till, with an unrecorded cry,
 He laid him down to die.

¹ The almond-tree is an emblem of old age because (as Hasselquist has pointed out) 'the white flowers blossom on the bare branches.'

² A crown of olive was given to the victor in the Olympic games; a crown of bay (that is, of laurel) to the victor in the Pythian; and a crown of oak to him who had saved the life of a Roman citizen in battle.

³ 'The hoary head is a crown of glory.' Solomon.

⁴ 'The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.' Psalm xc. 10.

⁵ 'Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre.' Genesis xxiii. 19.

⁶ 'And the Lord said unto him, I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.' Deut. xxxiv. 4.

'So too, for us, the end is nigh:
Our mortal race is nearly run:
Our earthly toil is nearly done!
Ah, thou and I,
Who in the grave so soon shall lie,
Have little time to see the sun—
So little it is nearly none!—
The night is near!

'What then?
Amen!
All hail, my love, good cheer!
Keep back thy unshed tear!
Not thou nor I
Shall mourn or sigh!
Nay now, we twain—
Old man, old wife—
In just the few days that remain—
Let us make merry!—let us laugh!—
For now at length we quaff
The last, best wine of life,—
The very last, the very best,
The double cup of love and rest!

'What though the groaning world declare
That life is but a load of care!—
A burden wearisome to bear!—
That as we journey down the years
The path is through a Vale of Tears!—
Yet we who have the burden borne,
And travelled until travel-worn,
Forget the weight upon the back,
Forget the long and weary track,
And sit remembering here to-day
How we were children at our play;—

'And, half in doze, at idle ease,
Before the hearth-fire's dying brands,
With elbows on our trembling knees,
With chins between our wrinkled hands,
We sail unnavigable seas,
We roam impenetrable lands,
We leap from clime to clime,
We conquer space and time;—

'For, every glowing ember
Enkindles fancy to remember;—
Till all the once-forgotten past,
Long gone, comes back to us at last;—

As if the sea should render up
From out its treasure-hiding caves
The King of Thulé's golden cup;
Or the green Adriatic's waves
Back to the wondering Doge should fling
Venetia's bridal-ring;
Or Ghizeh's time-defying graves
Should burst their marble lids asunder,
And to the Bedouin's wonder
Reveal th' Egyptian jewels hid
By that sphinx-guarded pyramid
Which they are buried under!

'And howsoever strange it seems,
The dearest of our drowsy dreams
Is of that billow-beaten shore
Where, with our childish hands,
We piled the salty sands
Into a palace that still stands!—
Not where it first arose,
Not where the wild wind blows,
Not by the ocean's roar,—
(For long ago those turrets fell
Beneath that billowy swell),—
But still within the heart's deep core
Our tumbled tower we oft restore
And ever build it o'er and o'er!

'We have one palace more,—
Not made with hands,—
Nor have our feet yet entered at its door!
It lieth not behind us, but before!

'Dear love, our pilgrimage is thither tending,
And there shall have its ending.

'At first we sought, like all mankind,
The land that all have failed to find,—
Arcadia, by the poets sung,—
That pleasing phantom of the mind
That lured our feet when we were young;

At last, at last—no longer gulled and tricked
By that vain bubble which was early pricked—
We seek,—not that Utopia fair
Which vanished into viewless air,—
Not that all-rosy realm which, like the flowery spot
Where Eden's garden once was planted,
No longer is enchanted,

And bloometh not;—
 We seek,—with unmisguided feet,
 As our immortal aim and lot,
 Not hope's mirage, not fancy's cheat,
 Not faith's fair fabulous pretence,
 Not any phantom to beguile
 The spirit for a while,
 Then disappoint the sense;—
 We seek,—not on the mocking earth, not here
 (Yet haply not far hence)
 That Heavenly City, crystal clear,
 Which, lustrous with a light intense,
 Was seen from Patmos¹ by the Seer
 Whose century-old and dazzled eyes
 Beheld it shining in the skies!—

'No vision, for a moment bright,
 Then taking flight!
 But its huge bulk was measured in his sight
 (As he hath told)
 By an archangel's reed of gold;
 Length, breadth, and height
 Each equalling each²;
 Far as the gazer's eye could reach;
 Each several side twelve thousand furlongs square,—
 All glittering in the upper air!—
 So lustrous long, so flashing high,
 So blazing broad that no mere mortal eye,
 Within its tiny ball,
 Could then (or now) encompass all
 The whole red³, radiant girth
 Of that all-golden City of the Blest,—
 Outmeasuring every mountain on the earth!

'For neither Chimborazo's crest,
 Where the tired eagle stops to rest;
 Nor Hecla's burning pile,

¹ The island of Patmos—to which St. John was exiled by the Roman government, and where (according to a tradition of the early Church) he wrote the Apocalypse—is one of the Sporades, in the Grecian Archipelago. Its modern name is Patmo. Travellers are pointed to a spot on the side of a hill, not far from a Greek monastery, as the place where the Seer stood when he beheld the vision of the New Jerusalem. See Rev. xxi. 3.

² The figure of a cube seems to have been to the oriental mind a symbol of ideal beauty in architecture,—as is shown not only by St. John's description of the proportions of the Celestial City, but also by the plans both of the Jewish Tabernacle and of the Mahometan Kaaba.

³ 'And the city was pure gold.' Rev. xxi. 18. Hence it was *red*—which is the universal epithet in poetry to describe the colour of pure gold.

Whose smoke rolls up for many a lofty mile;
 Nor Tenerif's cloud-confronting isle;
 Nor the Five Cities of the Plain¹;
 Nor that engulfing main²
 Wherein their shaken towers, in falling,
 Sank in th' asphaltic flood³, appalling;—
 Not all these mountains, cities, seas,—
 Though heaped in one,—nor seven times these!—
 Could measure forth the space
 Of God's great dwelling-place;—
 That City of Delight,
 Fixt in Heaven's highest height—
 Unsunned, unmooned,
 Yet needing not the ray
 Of any orb that gilds the day
 Or beautifies the night;
 Untempled⁴, yet attuned
 To praise divine:
 For they who worship there need not a shrine,
 Since they behold His face.

'Now hark to me, dear love, while I repeat
 The sacred story
 That tells us of that City's glory!—

'For there, through many a golden street,
 Th' Eternal River floweth,
 Upon whose banks there groweth—
 On either side—
 The Tree of Life, in groves that midway meet
 To overarch the amber tide⁵,

¹ These were Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Tseboim, and Zoar. Of these, Zoar is known to have escaped. The old opinion that the other four were swallowed up by the Dead Sea, has been re-affirmed by some modern travellers, but disputed by others. Thus, Robinson holds that the cities were submerged; but Reland insists that there is no reason, either in Scripture or history, for supposing that the cities were destroyed by submersion, or were submerged at all.

² The Dead Sea.

³ Bitumen is thrown up from the bottom; and it floats in great masses on the surface, oozes through the fissures of rocks, and is deposited with gravel on the beach. It is called Jews' pitch.

⁴ 'And I saw no temple therein.' Rev. xxi. 22.

⁵ Dr. Adam Clarke, in his Commentary, says: 'As this Tree of Life is stated to be in the streets of the city, and on each side of the river, the *trees* must here be an enallage of the singular for the plural number, *trees of life*, or trees which yielded fruit by which life was preserved. The account in Ezekiel (chap. xlvii. 12) is this: "And by the river, upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade; it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine."' "

Which pictures all their pendent fruits
 Deep in the glassy flood that glides along their roots;
 And ever as the waveless stream goes wending
 Its tranquil way,
 It watereth plants that need no other tending,
 Self-tended they;—
 And, chief, that amaranthine flower¹, transplanted first
 From Heaven to Eden's garden,
 To bloom awhile ere man was yet accurst,
 But then, on his offending,
 And while his punishment was pending,—
 In heavenly token of his pardon
 Plucked back on high, above all death and doom,
 To where, beyond the tomb,
 It now empurples with a fadeless bloom
 A summer never-ending,—
 To crown victorious souls, on their ascending,
 With that immortal wreath for which they died contending.

'And each of all the twelve great portals
 Is one great pearl²,—
 Gold-banded, like a ring of fair device;
 With adamantine hinges, ever-during;
 Each pearl with lustre so alluring
 That though beyond the gaze of mortals,—
 Above the earth's wild whirl,—
 Yet from afar it sweetly doth entice
 The souls of men to wish them in that Paradise;
 Each pearl of greater price
 Than in the parable³ is told
 Of him who all his treasures sold

¹ Milton's allusion to the amaranth is the following:

'Immortal amarant, a flower which once
 In Paradise, fast by the Tree of Life
 Began to bloom; but soon for man's offence
 To Heaven removed, where first it grew, there grows,
 And flowers aloft, shading the fount of life,
 And where the river of bliss through midst of Heaven
 Rolls o'er Elysian flowers her amber stream.'

P. L. Bk. III. 353 *et seq.*

'*Amarantus flos symbolum est immortalitatis.*'—Clem. Alex.

The amaranth has the colour of purple velvet.

St. Peter alludes to the flower thus: 'An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that *fadeth not away*' (*amaranton*). 1 Pet. i. 4.

'Ye shall receive a crown of glory that *fadeth not away*' (*amaranton*). *Ibid.* v. 4.

² 'And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl.' Rev. xxi. 21.

³ St. Matthew xiii. 46.

And went and bought with these
That jewel pure and rare
With which none others could compare—
Except the pearls those portals hold,
Ten thousand times more fair!

'And at each portal an archangel waits',
To keep wide open those eternal gates;
For he who saw was bid to say
"The gates shall not be shut by day,
And as for night, no night is there¹."

'And each foundation glittereth fair
With heavenly stones, half-dimmed with earthly names,
As if to veil from mortal eyes their flames—
Lest their unshaded brightness should excel
All power of tongue to tell,—
Or lest, with eyes transpierced with pain,
The Holy Seer had fallen blind,—
Whereby, beheld too plain,
The vision, unrecorded to mankind,
Had come and passed in vain.

'And those illustrious stones—the mystic twelve—
Each for a tribe of Israel's line²—
More fiercely shine
Than any for which mortals delve
In any earthly mine!—

'For when Golconda or Brazil
In cavern dark, or deep-dug hill,
Rewards the slave's dim-lighted glance
With that fair spark which happy chance
Unblinds his searching eyes to see,
And, for his finding, sets him free³;—

'Not this soul-ransoming gem,
Nor Caesar's glittering diadem,
Hath power to burn, and blaze,
And charm th' enchanted gaze,
Like those fair jewels in the rays
Of that immortal light
Whereof the mortal eye bears not the sight,
But whose white glory the Archangels praise.

¹ 'Twelve gates; and, at the gates, twelve angels.' Rev. xxi. 12.

² 'And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.' *Ibid.* 25.

³ 'Twelve gates . . . and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.' Rev. xxi. 12.

⁴ In the old diamond-mines, whenever a slave found a diamond of a certain size and value he was rewarded with his immediate emancipation.

' My love, now lend thine ear and listen
While, like the Patmian, I declare
How those twelve jewels glisten,
And what the names they bear :

' The first, a jasper,—which in Ispahan
Is called a diamond in the speech of man ;
The next a sapphire,—whose celestial blue
Gives the Tyrrhenian waves their hue ;
The third, that Chalcedonian stone
Which men no longer find,
Yet once was known
In that old City of the Blind¹
Which dust of deserts since hath overblown ;
The fourth, an emerald,—glittering green
As when, upon an olive's rind,
A drop of dew is seen ;
The fifth, a sard,—that stone of flesh
That ever bleeds afresh,
And stands for Calvary's blood-red sign ;
The sixth, a ruby,—set to shine
Like the ensanguined wine
That filled the Holy Grail² ;
The seventh a chrysolite,—
So golden bright
It makes Aurora pale ;
The eighth, a beryl,—sparkling white,
Like moonlit frost,
As seen by hunters who, at night,
The Caucasus have crossed ;
The ninth, a topaz,—hazel-eyed

¹ Different reasons are given why ancient Chalcedon was called the City of the Blind: one is, that it was founded by a colony of blind men—a notion which is sufficiently refuted by its own absurdity: another is that the settlers, though not literally, were metaphorically blind, because they heedlessly chose a bad situation, when, if they had kept their eyes open, they could not have failed to see (and to choose) the neighbouring and more beautiful spot that was afterward occupied by Constantinople.

² The Holy Grail, or Sangrael, was the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper. Joseph of Arimathea, on the day of the Crucifixion, filled this cup with blood which flowed from his Master's wounds. The relic, after being thus filled, was stolen. The thieves, it is said, were exasperated Jews. After forty-two years, according to Christian tradition, Christ appeared to Joseph, and restored to him the cup. Joseph then carried it to Glastonbury in England, whence it was again spirited away, so that it was made the object of a quest by some of the Knights of the Round Table. The term Sangrael was once thought to be *Sanguis Realis*, or real blood; but Professor Skeat has shown that this is an incorrect etymology. *Grail* is a cup, and *San Grail* is the holy cup.

Like Lilith¹, Adam's earlier bride
 Whom first he loved and lost
 Ere Eve was moulded from his side ;
 The tenth, a chrysoprase,—
 Flashing with yellow rays,
 Up, down, a thousand ways,
 Through all that region wide ;
 Th' eleventh, a jacinth,—fairer than if dyed
 By sun and wind
 With colours of that blossom, lush and pied
 With which its name is twinned ;
 The twelfth, an amethyst,—whose font of fire
 Casts forth a purple jet
 More orient than the East,—
 As if the day should rise, but not to set,
 And the red dawn, with all its gay adorning,
 Should linger on in one immortal morning² !
 'O fair that City is to see,
 Which lureth thee and me !
 It is arrayed in bride's attire !
 It celebrates the marriage-feast !
 It satisfies the soul's desire !
 With strength declined, yet faith increased,
 We thitherward aspire !
 'As he whose way, through briers and weeds,
 To royal Shiraz leads,
 (Where the rose-gardens are³)
 May guess his nearness from afar,
 As soon as he espies,—
 With gladdened eyes,—
 That towering, that enchanted tree
 Which, never by a zephyr stirred,
 Nor rustled by a fluttering bird,
 Yet, by its own sweet action free,

¹ The Kábala has a myth, that before the creation of Eve, Adam had a wife named Lilith.

² The Scriptural catalogue of the twelve stones (Rev. xxi. 19, 20¹) is as follows : 'The first foundation was jasper ; the second, sapphire ; the third, a chalcedony ; the fourth, an emerald ; the fifth, sardonyx ; the sixth, sardius ; the seventh, chrysolite ; the eighth, beryl ; the ninth, a topaz ; the tenth, a chrysoprasus ; the eleventh, a jacinth ; the twelfth, an amethyst.'

In this list the jasper is the diamond ; the sardonyx is the sard, or oriental carnelian (from *Carneus*, or raw flesh) ; the sardius is the ruby ; the beryl is possibly the turquoise ; while the jacinth is etymologically the same as the hyacinth (just as a *gem* is an original word for a flower).

³ The rose-gardens of Shiraz were so famous in Persia that the poems and songs of Sadi (who lived in that city) were called the Gulistan, or the Rose-Garden. Ralph Waldo Emerson set the fashion for spelling Gulistan with a *u*. But the word is pronounced as if the *u* were an *o*—namely, Golistan.

Swings in that breathless air of balm,
And, in a perfect calm,
Bends its high top in courtesy,
And, with a gracious nod,
Salutes each passing pilgrim-band
To bid them welcome to the land;—

‘So in the Paradise of God,
The Tree of Life, with greener plume,
Unearthly in its bloom,
Already waves its signal-bough,
And, like a beckoning hand,
Which we, beholding, understand,
Invites us thither now!

‘To this celestial welcome, what reply
Make thou and I?

‘Ah, though the rapturous vision
Allures us to a Land Elysian,
Yet aged are our feet, and slow,
And not in haste to go.

‘Life still hath many joys to give,
Whereof the sweetest is—to live!

‘Then fear we death? Not so!
Or do we tremble? No!
Nor do we even grieve!
And yet a gentle sigh we heave,
And unto Him Who fixes fate,—
Without Whose sovereign leave,
Down-whispered from on high,
Not even a daisy dares to die,—
We, jointly, thou and I,
Implore a little longer date,—
A little term of kind reprieve,—
A little lease till by-and-by!

‘May it be Heaven’s decree,—
Here, now, to thee and me,—
That for a season still
The eye shall not grow dim;
That for a few more days
The ear shall not yet cease to hear the hymn
Which the tongue utters to His praise;
That for a little while
The heart faint not, nor fail;

For even the wintry sun is bright,
And cheering to our aged sight;
Yea, though the frosts prevail,
Yet even the icy air,
The frozen plain, the leafless wood
Still keep the earth so fresh and fair
That God Himself has called it good!

'O final Summoner of the Soul!
Grant, of Thy pitying grace,
That for a little longer space
The pitcher at the fountain's rim
Be shattered not, but still kept whole,—
Still overflowing at the brim!
If but a year, if but a day,
Thy lifted hand, O stay!
Loose Thou not yet, O Lord,
The silver cord!
Break thou not yet the golden bowl¹!

—Thus, garrulous, the aged pair
Sat in their chimney-nook,
With hearts half glad and half afraid;
And while the fire-light flickered there,
They talked and laughed—they wept and prayed;
Until, with weary, wistful look,
They saw the embers fade,—
And, darkly through the wintry air,
Came nightfall and the shade!

v.

'Thou and I!'
The voice no longer said;
But two white stones, instead,
Above the twain, long dead,
Still utter, each to each,
The same familiar speech,
'Thou and I!'

Not spoken to the passer-by,
But just as if, beneath the grass,
Deep underfoot of all who pass,
The sleeping dust should wake to say,
Each to its fellow-clay,
Each in the same old way,
'Thou and I!'

¹ 'Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain.' Eccles. xii. 6.

And each to either should reply,—
(Tomb murmuring unto tomb,—
Stone answering unto stone,
Yet not with sound of human moan,
Nor breath of mortal sigh,
But voiceless as the dead's dumb cry)—
'Thou and I!'

And whosoever draweth nigh
With reverent feet and holy fear,
And tarrieth for a space—
The letters on the stone to trace,
Or drop a tender tear,
Shall (if he have an ear to hear,
And know the language of the place)
Hear other whisperings to and fro,
Half-muffled in the dust below;
Not said in words, nor sounded clear,
But, though all mystic to the ear,
Yet to the heart all plain;—
A silent speech by sign and token,
More tender than by any language spoken;—
At first the old refrain—
'Thou and I!'
Then, by-and-by,
This faintly-added strain:—

'We twain,
As here we rest within the gloom,
Are sundered not, but still remain
Twain one,
As when we walked together in the sun!
Love, lying in its graveyard bed,
Is not unwed,
But newly-nuptialled—groom and bride
For ever side by side—
As if the faithful dead
Had never died!
The spirit and the body part,
Yet love abideth, heart to heart.

'O silent comrade of my rest,
With hands here crossed upon thy breast,
Have I forgotten who thou art?
O marble brow,
Here pillowed next to mine,
Have I not guessed,
By many a certain sign,
Who lieth near me in that grave of thine?

'For though above us, green and high,
The yew-trees grow,
And churchyard ravens fly,
And mourners come and go,
Yet thou and I,
Who dust to dust lie here below,
Still one another know!
Yea, thee I know—it still is thou;
And me thou know'st—it still is I;
True lovers once, true lovers now!—
The same old vow,
The same old thrill,
The same old love between us still!

'The gloomy grave hath frosts that kill,
But love is safe from all their chill!

'Love's flame—
Consuming, unconsumed—
In hearts that beat, or hearts entombed—
Is fed by life and death the same!

'Love's spark
Is brightest when love's final house is dark!

'Love's shroud—
That wraps its bosom round—
Must crumble in the charnel-ground,
Till all the long white winding-sheet
Shall drop to dust from head to feet,
But love's strong cord,
Th' eternal tie,
Th' immortal bond that binds
Love's twain immortal minds;—
This silken knot
Shall never rot—
Nor moulder in the mouldy mound—
Nor mildew—nor decay—
Nor fall apart—nor drop away—
Nor ever be unbound!

'Love's dust,
Whatever grave it fill,
Though buried deep, is deathless still
Love hath no death, and cannot die
This love is ours, as here we lie,—
Thou and I!'

FINALE.

*HERE, little book, thou comest to an end ;
Yet ere thou bid farewell, add one more rhyme ;
For since these Northern gales of autumn-time,—
That shrivel other leaves,—perchance portend
The like for thee (though this may Heaven forfend!)
Fly with these winds,—which, in their antique prime,
First wafted Odin's runes from clime to clime,—
And let thy flying leaves their rustlings blend
(For one brief moment) with that anthem vast
Whose rhythm eternal tunes the thunder's blast,
The linnet's warble, and the lover's sigh!
Nor grieve if then thy fleeting hour be past.
The bards are one, the lowly and the high!
That thou wert of them, be content and die!*

'A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED.'

I.

THE old Taff tavern had for a sign
A faded flagon of painted wine,
With a mouldy motto that meant to read:
'A friend in need is a friend indeed.'

II.

When farmer, fisher, and hunter were there,
To mingle their mirth, or kill their care,—
However they wrangled, in this they agreed:
'A friend in need is a friend indeed.'

III.

They drank to the tavern-sign one day,—
Till mugs of pewter and pipes of clay
Made foam of liquor and fume of weed:
'A friend in need is a friend indeed.'

IV.

'Then here's to the truest of friends!' said one:
'What friend hath a hunter so true as his gun?
It renders him service with uttermost speed!
'A friend in need is a friend indeed.'"

V.

'But what if thy powder, my lad, be wet?
No fair-weather friend is a fisherman's net!
Mine earneth me many a tankard of mead!
'A friend in need is a friend indeed.'"

VI.

'Thy gun is a slayer—thy net is a snare:
Of friends who are bloody and crafty beware!
I drink to the plough!—I have mouths to feed!
'A friend in need is a friend indeed.'"

VII.

Then, thumping the table, they said with a laugh,
'Now who shall decide it but Grandfather Taff?—
For *he* is the landlord who lives by the creed,
'A friend in need is a friend indeed.'"

VIII.

'Say, which is a man's best friend?' they cried,
'The gun, or the net, or the plough?—Decide!—
The young should unto the old give heed!
"A friend in need is a friend indeed."'

IX.

He answered, 'What fools you young men are!
I drink to the buxom maid of the bar,
Whom I to the altar to-morrow shall lead!
"A friend in need is a friend indeed."'

THE WANDERER'S LOVE-SONG.

I.

THROUGH many a kingdom and city and land
I travel away from the clasp of thy hand;
But whether on mountain or river or sea,
Wherever I wander, my heart is with thee!

II.

The purple and gold at the break of the day,
The sparkle of dew-drops that sprinkle my way,
The bloom on the meadow, the bud on the tree,—
Whatever hath beauty reminds me of thee!

III.

The trill of the lark as he soars to the sky,
The sigh of the pine as the wind fleeth by,
The hymn of the locust, the hum of the bee,—
Whatever makes melody whispers of thee!

IV.

If I, as a bard, strike a note of my own,
Of banquet and laughter, of battle and groan,
My song is a love-song, whatever the key,—
Whatever I sing of, I sing it for thee!

V.

Of all the fair fancies that flit through my brain,
That come and go quickly, too bright to remain,
One vanisheth never, though others may flee,—
And this is the image, my darling, of thee!

VI.

The air is enchanted wherever I go—
Thyself the Enchantress who charmeth it so!—
And bountiful Nature is buoyant and free
Because her own spirit is borrowed of thee!

VII.

Without thee, the world would be empty and drear,
For *thou* art the blessing that gives it its cheer!
I care not what fortune the Fates may decree,—
My treasure of treasures is only in thee!

VIII.

To love thee, in absence, is rapture of bliss:
Then what were thy presence, and what were thy kiss?
—From mountain to river, from river to sea,
I hasten, my darling, I hasten to thee!

 LYRA INCANTATA.

I.

IN Gwenneth Tower, at Llanted,
In Cambrian days of old,
There hung a harp enchanted,
And on its rim of gold
This legend was enscrolled:
*'Whatever bard would win me,
Must strike and wake within me,
By one supreme endeavour,
A chord that sounds for ever.'*

II.

Three bards of lyre and viol,
By mandate of the King¹,
Were bidden to a trial
To find the magic string—
(If there were such a thing).
Then, after much essaying
Of tuning, came the playing;
And lords and ladies splendid
Watched as those bards contended.

¹ This was the Welsh King Gwen or Gwenneth. He was the son of Rotri Mawr (or Roderick the Great), and came to the throne A. D. 853.

III.

The first, a minstrel hoary,
 Then sang of Goth and Hun,
 Of conquest, and of glory,
 Of battles fought and won :
 But when his song was done,
 Although the bard was lauded
 (For clapping hands applauded),
 Yet, spite of the laudation,
 The harp ceased its vibration.

IV.

The second changed the measure,
 And turned from fire and sword
 To sing a song of pleasure—
 The wine-cup and the board :
 Till, at his wit, all roared,—
 And the high hall resounded
 With merriment unbounded !
 —The harp, loud as the laughter,
 Grew hushed as that, soon after !

V.

The third—in lover's fashion,
 And with his blood on fire—
 Then sang of love's pure passion—
 The heart and its desire :
 And as he smote the wire
 The listeners, gathering round him,
 Caught up a wreath and crowned him.
 —The crown . . . hath faded never !
 —The harp . . . resounds for ever !

SIR OLAF.

(From the German of Heine¹.)

I.

BY the porch of the Cathedral
 Stand two men together, waiting :
 Both are robed in scarlet raiment :
 One the King, and one the Headsman.

¹ The object of this translation is to show the many changes in the metre of the original. These changes are here strictly followed.

And the King saith to the Headsman,
'From the psalm the priests are singing,
Now methinks the marriage finished—
Headsman, hold thy good axe ready!'

Clang of bell, and peal of organ!
Forth the folk stream from the temple!
Motley is the throng,—and, midway,
Come the bridal-pair, bejewelled!

Pale, and full of fear and anguish
Is the King's all-beauteous daughter;
Bluff and blithesome is Sir Olaf,—
And his red mouth, it is smiling!

To the King, who standeth scowling,
Saith the Knight,—with red mouth smiling,—
'Sire, thy son bids thee good morning!
Thou, this day, my head requirest!—

'I, this day, must die! O let me
Live the day through till the midnight,
That my nuptials may be honoured
With a banquet and a torch-dance!—

'Let me, let me live, I pray thee,
Till the last cup shall be emptied—
Till the last dance shall be ended—
Let me live until the midnight!'

And the King saith to the Headsman,
'To our son we grant a respite—
Let him live until the midnight!
Headsman, hold thy good axe ready!'

II.

Sir Olaf at the festive board
Drains the last flagon that is poured;
His wife leans on him there
In white despair;
And at the door stands the Headsman!

The waltzing begins,—and the Knight to his side
Clasps with a frenzy his youthful bride!
The two,—as the torches glance,—
Dance the last dance!
And at the door stands the Headsman!

The blaring trumpets are loud and glad!
The flutes are pitiful, tender, and sad!
And to watch the dancing twain
Is to shiver with pain!
And at the door stands the Headsman!

And while they whirl through the echoing room,
'O beautiful bride,' saith the whispering groom,
'My love for thee cannot be told—
The grave is so cold!'
And at the door stands the Headsman!

III.

Sir Olaf, it is noon of night,
Thy life hath filled its measure!
Thou with the daughter of thy prince
Hast had forbidden pleasure.

The monks, with their murmurings, now begin
The prayer for the dead's redeeming;
The man in red, by a block of black,
Stands with a white axe gleaming.

Sir Olaf strides to the Castle-yard:
The swords and the torches glisten:
Then speaketh the red mouth of the knight,
Who laugheth at all who listen:

'I bless the sun, and I bless the moon,
And the stars that in Heaven glitter!
I also bless the little birds
That in the tree-tops twitter!

'I bless the sea, and I bless the land,—
And the blossoms in their blowing!—
I bless the violets,—like thine eyes,
So soft and yet so glowing!

'And though, for those violet eyes, my wife,
My body be rent and riven,
Yet also I bless the alder-tree
Where thou to me wert given!'

AMONG THE REEDS.

(Words for Music.)

I.

SWIM fast, O wounded swan, swim fast!
Thy mate awaits thee in her nest,—
Not dreaming that the dart was cast
Which quivers in thy bleeding breast!

II.

Swim fast, O dying swan, swim fast!
Die not till she beholds thy fate,—
Lest she may deem some fickle blast
Hath blown thee to another mate!

III.

Swim fast, O faithful swan, swim fast!
The tide—adverse—is swift and strong!
Swim fast, swim fast, until at last
Thou sing to her thy dying song!

HOMEWARD BOUND.

FLY fast, O ship! the sea is wide,
My love is on the other side:
How far the East seems from the West!
When shall I clasp her, breast to breast?
When shall I kiss her, lip to lip?
My heart flies faster than the ship!
My darling dwells beside the sea
And looks and yearns and waits for me.
Or have I stayed too long away?
The world is full of change, they say:
In all the changes that occur
What if there be a change in her!
O breeze that bloweth good and ill,
Come whisper if she loves me still!
Give answer, O ye billows blue,
And tell me if she still is true!
The heedless wind and heartless wave
Give not the answer that I crave:
What if she be as wild and gay
And full of fickleness as they!

I swear by all the heavens above
 I love her with a changeless love!
 Beyond where sky and ocean blend
 I love her to the world's far end!

Fly fast, O ship! and to the gale
 Spread every snowy swelling sail!
 Then nevermore shall land or sea
 Divide agen my love from me!

THE MINNESINGER'S WIFE.

A. D. 1285.

(GOTTFRIED VON NEUFEN¹ speaks.)

I.

NOT only in my lady's eyes
 Do I her beauty find,
 But all the lore that poets prize
 Is garnered in her mind.

II.

She is the soul of all I sing,—
 For though to me belong
 The pipe, the shell, the chorded string,
 She is herself the song.

III.

There is no wisdom in my word,
 Nor music in my lay,
 Save what I have more sweetly heard
 My lady sing or say.

IV.

She gazeth at the flower and star,
 And readeth in their looks
 A mystic meaning deeper far
 Than any writ in books.

¹ This poem is put into the mouth of Gottfried von Neufen because he was one of the chief minnesingers of his time. He was a grandson of the old and choleric Count Berthold von Neufen, who figures in the ballad of 'The White Ass,' at page 176 of this volume. Gottfried's lays were written in the quaint German of the thirteenth century. He gaily celebrated the red lips of his wife in some piquant stanzas which still remain.

V.

I often to my love have read
 The bards of olden times,—
 And then some happy word she said
 Outrivalled all their rhymes.

VI.

She is so fair, she is so wise,
 She is so pure in thought,
 She seems an angel of the skies
 Whom I have snared and caught.

VII.

She loves me with a love so true
 It never can be told,—
 A love like love when love was new,
 Before the earth grew old.

VIII.

O never yet such lovers were,
 And never more shall be,
 For I am all the world to her,—
 She, all the world to me!



EXPIATION.

FAIR lady, if the heedless asp that stung
 The love-lorn Egypt to her welcome death,
 Had known whose heart it was to which he clung,
 Or what a queen he pilfered of her breath,
 He would have stung his venom'd self instead,—
 As other serpents do ;—and so will I ;—
 For since, O queenlier queen !—since thou hast said
 That I have wound my serpentining way
 To thy imperial heart, to sting and slay,—
 I make to thy reproaches this reply :
 Not thou, my queen,—but I, thy worm,—shall die !
 I spare the bosom where I lay my head !
 Farewell ! Live *thou* ! But *I*,—self-stung,—am dead !



THE KING OF THULÉ.

(From the German of Goethe.)

I.

THERE was a King in Thulé:
He was a faithful soul:
And his leman on her death-bed
Gave him a golden bowl.

II.

Beyond all other treasures
This love-gift did he prize!
And he never filled the goblet
But tears would fill his eyes.

III.

And when his days were ending,
He gave his heir the throne
And the cities of the kingdom,—
And kept the cup alone.

IV.

He made a feast right royal,
And with his knights sat he
In the high hall of his fathers,
In his castle by the sea.

V.

There, for his farewell bumper,
He poured the red, red wine,
And he drained the hallowed goblet,
And flung it to the brine!

VI.

He saw it dip and glitter
And sink into the sea,—
And with it sank his eyelids,
And never more drank he!



THE SHEIK'S ENIGMA.

I.

THE cunning Sheik of Carmahan¹
(A very droll facetious man
Whose wit was hard to comprehend)
Thus wrote a riddle to his friend :

II.

'I had a Pearl of greater price
Than all the Twelve of Paradise !
This gem (my fault must be confessed)
I wore too vainly on my breast.

III.

'For though I kept my precious prize
Enwrapped and hid from envious eyes,
Yet if my bosom had been bare,
They must have spied my jewel there.

IV.

'Once on a wild and stormy day
A whirlwind shook my pearl away :
I rushed in frenzy up and down,
And hunted for it through the town.

V.

'I searched and searched, from nook to nook,
Yet all the while forgot to look
Within the one and only shrine
Where I had hid this gem of mine.

VI.

'All night my brain was in a whirl
Lest I should never find my pearl,—
A treasure which to me was worth
All other precious things on earth.

VII.

'The morning came and lit the skies,
And yet to my benighted eyes
The world was dark, or I was blind,
Or else a madness seized my mind.

VIII.

'At last, despairing in my quest,
I dashed my hand against my breast,
And with relentless stroke on stroke
I bruised my heart until it broke.

¹ In Persia.

IX.

'O happy bruise! O soothing smart!
 For by the breaking of my heart
 I found my Pearl just as before,
 Hid in my bosom's very core!

X.

'Now therefore tell me, if you can,'
 (Thus wrote the Sheik of Carmahan,)
 'What hidden meaning you divine
 In this mysterious screed of mine?'

XI.

'Your precious Pearl,' his friend replied.
 'Was Argazil, your youngest bride:
 You quarrelled, and she ran away—
 But she has since come back to stay.'

A VALENTINE.

(With a Spray of Snowdrops.)

O CHILLING maid, whose frosty smile
 Benumbs my heart and reason,—
 Accept in thy most freezing style
 This emblem of the season.

CALLIO'S THREE QUERIES.

A. D. 1590.

Callio was a Court rhymmer in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

I.

WOULD I give up the maiden
 Whose eyes look into mine?
 —Not for the King's own daughter
 With all her jewels fine!

II.

Would I give up my treasures,
 The books upon my shelf?
 —Not for the throne and kingdom—
 To be the King myself!

III.

Would I give up the laurel
 That on Parnassus grows?
 —Not for all other honours
 That all the Earth bestows!

ST. AUGUSTINE TO MONICA.

(In their Garden at Hippo.)

O MOTHER, in thy bower
I plant for thee a flower
Which by an emblem bids the soul aspire :
For just as here, amid this muck and mire,
This earth-enrooted Heliotrope
Pursues with ever-wandering eye
The flying Sun across the sky,—
So doth the flesh-encumbered soul,
Earth-clogged, and not allowed to fly,
Yearn upward and, through all the blue,
Its Shining and Immortal Hope
For evermore pursue !

—♦—

THE OLD OLD STORY.

A COUPLE of robins
That perched on a tree
Said each to the other,
'How sweet it would be
To love and to marry
And always agree !'
They loved and they married :
But husband and wife
While yet in the honeymoon
Kindled a strife,
And all about nothing,
Yet spoiling their life.
They live in a garden
Where cherries are red,
They sleep in the downiest
Nest for a bed,
Yet always are wishing
They never had wed.
They bicker, they fidget,
They rumple their wings,
And this is what each
To the other now sings :
'To love and to marry
Are opposite things.'

ABELARD'S FIRST HOPE.

PARIS, A. D. 1118.

THE maiden of my heart's delight,
 Who tempts me with a face too fair,
 Is not a nun, yet morn and night
 She bows her pious head in prayer.

I dare not speak to her of love,
 Nor drop a hint of love's desire,
 For eyes like hers, lit from above,
 Sparkle, but not with earthly fire.

I kiss her only on her hand—
 Devoutly—at her finger-tips:
 What would she guess or understand
 Were I to venture on her lips?

What if the passion in me pent,
 Which I have hid for many days,
 Should of a sudden find a vent
 And burst into an open blaze!

Could I—so rash a fool—be sure
 That she who is so chaste and chill,
 So proud, so passionless and pure,
 Would pardon and would love me still?

I dare not put her to the test:
 I only ask a saint so fair,
 Not for a pillow on her breast,
 But a remembrance in her prayer!

THE AMSTERDAM FISHERMAN.

Among the venturesome Netherland boatmen in the sixteenth century, it was a custom (not yet wholly extinct) to ornament their fishing-smacks with a charm for safety in the form of a carved and gilded image of the Virgin Mary as *Stella Maris*, or Star of the Sea.

I.

OUT went the Skipper
 On Zuyder Zee:
 Calm was the weather:
 'Watch!' said he,—
 'Watch to the windward,
 And watch to the lee!

God alone knoweth
Why the wind bloweth,
Whence is the tempest,
Or where it will be!
Ora pro nobis,
Sancta Maria,
Star of the Sea !'

II.

Wild was the whirlwind
On Zuyder Zee :
Pale was the Skipper :
'Watch !' cried he,—
'Hell is in riot !
The furies are free !
Breakers to larboard !
Breakers to starboard !
Death and the Devil
Are dancing with me !
Ora pro nobis,
Sancta Maria,
Star of the Sea !'

III.

Home went the Skipper
From Zuyder Zee :
Watching was ended :
'Pray !' said he,—
'Blest is the boatman
Who bendeth his knee !
Queen of the ocean,—
Praise and devotion,
Homage and honour
And glory to Thee !
Ora pro nobis,
Sancta Maria,
Star of the Sea !'



THE WHITE ASS¹.

WÜRTTEMBERG, A.D. 1275.

I.

ON Hohen Neuffen's castled mount
 There bubbled once a sparkling fount,
 Now choked with tangled grass;
 And though the sentries of the foe
 Looked upward from the plain below,
 They never saw the pass
 Through which the water-casks were borne
 From fount to castle, every morn,
 Upon a milk-white Ass.

II.

Who led him to and from the place?
 It was the pearl of all her race,—
 Fair Vola, she whose sire
 Denied her hand to one whose birth
 Was noble as his manly worth;
 Whereat, with youthful ire,
 Her warlike lover, with his train,
 Had come by night, and lit the plain
 With many a bivouac fire.

¹ This is a Swabian story; and as a few other ballads, springing from the same South German soil, will be found scattered throughout the remaining pages of this volume, a preliminary note concerning the country may be useful at this point.

Swabia is no longer on the map. Schwabenland of the sixteenth century is overlapped and blotted out by Württemberg of the nineteenth. But Swabia, as a *name*, is still alive on men's lips—like Albion, Erin, Gallia, or Columbia. It has faded from geography to be perennial in memory and fancy.

Among the patriotic people whose native land it designates, the word Swabia is a tender synonym for their love of country—a fond term which they use in boasting of their ancient lineage, and of their sturdy stock. Allemania is an older title for the same region, but the pet name is always Swabia. In Ulm or Esslingen, a citizen—with city manners—says, 'I am a Württemberger'; but his rustic and rollicking neighbour, who visits the town as a peasant on a holiday, makes the air ring with the rustic cry, 'I am a Schwab!'

People of other countries may smile and say, 'Phoebus, what a name!'

But although the Schwabs, by the quaintness of their patois, and for their supposed Boeotian dullness of brains, have rendered themselves 'a cause of wit in others,' yet even when the laugh is against them, they still seem proud to be proverbied; and they always wear their patronymic as a badge of honour. Swabia is their country's *name*, not its *nickname*. It is the most characteristic and genuine of all the titles which they bestow upon their fatherland.

The people are a staunch, honest, and rustic race—with a dogged dignity

III.

Count Berthold, in his white old age
Then said, with all the testy rage
That frets an agèd breast,
'My daughter is my only one;
Nor shall her lover be my son;
For Guy of Teck loves best—
Not Vola's heart—nor Vola's hand—
But Vola's title to her land—
And Vola's money-chest!

IV.

'Though I be old, and soon to die,
Yet mine is still my castle high;
And though the Triple Fates,
And all the Furies, fierce and fell,
And Prince Apollyon, hot from hell,
With all his fiery mates,
Should beard me in my lofty den,
Yet I, with half my hundred men,
Would still defend my gates!'

of manner—with a solemn love of sober enjoyment—and with a perpetual glow of human kindness in their good and Gothic hearts.

Their picturesque and hilly country—though hardly so large, and not so grand as Switzerland—possesses many a haunt of beauty, which strangers, having once seen, will ever afterward remember. The Swabian Alps are Nature's stepping-stones to the Alps of Switzerland. The two countries are separated from each other only by the narrow width of Lake Constance; and one and the same mirror reflects the beauties of both. The Swabian Valleys of Urach are bewitching solitudes in which the fox and the wild deer dwell within the sound of village bells. The Black Forest is an enchanted border-land of Swabian romance. The 'dark-rolling Danube' is of Swabian origin. The Neckar, a fair daughter of the Rhine, is of Swabian career. And, although Germany is not one of the chief gardens of the earth, as England is, yet if there be a German garden-spot that may compare with Devonshire it is the smiling Valley of the Neckar: in other words, it is Swabia.

Whoever roams through the Swabian country in summer-time will find vineyards, music, and rural mirth; together with many a crumbled castle more beautiful in its ruin than in its prime.

It is the country of the Minnesingers of old. It is the country of the renowned Eberhart of the Beard, whom his fellow-countrymen glorify as the Americans idolize George Washington. It is the country of Kepler, the illustrious astronomer. It is the country of Tübingen and its time-honoured University. It is the country of Schubart and Frischlin and other heroes of free speech. It is the country of Danneker and his antique chisel. Above all, it is the country of Schiller and Wieland and Uhland—names to whose honour the whole earth is the monument.

It is with good reason, therefore, that Swabia, though lost from the map, survives in history, poetry, and romance.

V.

—Thought Guy of Teck, 'I know a power
To humble yonder lofty tower,
 However strong and proud;
For though it stands on such a height
That often it is out of sight,—
 Hid by a passing cloud,—
Yet Hunger climbs the highest walls,
And Famine soon shall haunt those halls
Till Berthold's men are cowed!

VI.

'For there, on such a craggy brink,
What can the wretches have to drink?
 What water, or what wine?
Of all the foes of man, the worst
(As every soldier knows) is thirst!
 Think how those heroes pine!
Think how in feverish, mocking dreams
They pant for their familiar streams—
 The Neckar and the Rhine!

VII.

Pale Vola wrung her helpless hands,
And wept to think that hostile bands
 Were on her father's ground;
But since she loved her lover well,
How could her virgin heart but swell
 To see the vale profound
Starred by his squadrons far and near?
—How could her soul but thrill to hear
 His martial trumpets sound?

VIII.

The patient Ass, that came and went,
Kept wondering what the trumpets meant,
 And why the maid shed tears,
And why she often stroked his side,
And brushed the flies from off his hide,
 And why she praised his ears,
And why she asked him if at night
He dared go down from Neuffen height
 To yonder foemen's spears!

IX.

The siege went on from day to day
Till half the summer slipt away,—
Yet not a shot was fired;
And barriers on the plain were built
Where Teck for pastime rode at tilt,—
In glittering mail attired;
While hungry men to Berthold went
To say the castle-stores were spent,
And food was now required.

X.

Old Berthold raved and swore, and said,
'Ye cowards, come ye here for bread?
How dare ye quit your post?
Not Guy of Teck, with all his throng,
Can take a tower so high and strong!
I fear not all his host!
I fear but ye, O carls of mine,
Who prate of lacking bread and wine,
And giving up the ghost!'

XI.

He flung to them an ear of wheat:
'Take each a grain,' quoth he, 'and eat!—
And base will be the knave
Who every morning drinks his fill
Of water from our mountain-rill,
Brought sparkling from the cave,
Yet who, for lack of crumb or crust,
Would crouch before the foe in dust,
And yield himself a slave!—

XII.

'My daughter shrinks not from her task
Of bringing us our water-cask;
And, though of high degree,
She serves us like a lowly maid!
O ye faint-hearted and afraid,
I scorn your coward plea!
Go find your courage once agen,
And be ye brave, if not as men,
Yet as a maid can be!'

XIII.

Fair Vola, from her turret high,
 Could see her lover's pennon fly;
 Or, if the mists were dense,
 Or rains begirt the mountain-height
 And hid him from her straining sight,—
 She turned her eyes from thence,
 And in the Ass's copious ears
 She told her love with smiles and tears,—
 As if the brute had sense!

XIV.

(No doubt the creature's sense was small;
 For to an ass, no sense at all
 Men jeeringly ascribe;
 Yet oftentimes it comes to pass
 That men, alas! are like the ass
 At whom they love to jibe!
 For Man himself, though proud he be,
 Is but an ass of first degree—
 And chief of all the tribe!)

XV.

The cliff which Berthold's castle crowned
 Had little space for pasture-ground;
 Yet on the height superb—
 Serene beneath the sky's blue vault—
 (And which the foe by no assault
 Had ventured to disturb)—
 Fair Vola's beast had room to browse,—
 And there he nipped the ilex boughs,
 And cropped the Cirsian herb¹.

XVI.

When Berthold's hundred hungry men
 Grew gaunt within their prison-pen,
 And showed the hollow cheek,—
 And all were worn to skin and bone,—
 Except the favoured Ass alone,
 Who grew more plump and sleek,—
 The soldiers shouted, 'We will slay
 That fattened beast this very day—
 And live on him a week!'

¹ The thistle, or *Cirsium*—especially the *Cirsium lanceolatum*, or prickly thistle.

XVII.

'But *who*,' cried Berthold, 'then will bring
Our casks up hither from the spring?
Go kill the Ass, who will!
But whoso kills the Ass, I swear
Shall be himself an ass to bear
The water up the hill!'
—And since no soldier had the nerve
In such a dubious rôle to serve,
Their threatening tongues grew still!

XVIII.

Soon afterward, one day at dawn,
They looked, and lo! the Ass was gone!
They searched his empty stall,—
They searched his airy pasture-ground,—
They searched the castle, round and round,—
Within, without the wall,—
But could not find on all the mount,
Nor in the wood, nor at the fount,
A trace of him at all!

XIX.

No wonder!—for the books relate
How Vola, through the castle-gate,
By help of Berthold's key,—
At dead of night,—all russet-clad
As if she were a peasant-lad,—
Short-kirtled to the knee,—
Led forth the Ass, and rode him down
From Neuffen height to Neuffen town!—
For a brave girl was she!

XX.

The secret plan which she had planned
Was known—not to the hungry band—
But only to her sire:
Whom Vola—ere their food was spent—
Had begged with tears for his consent,
Which he refused with ire;—
And yet at last the girl prevailed,
For when the final forage failed
He granted her desire.

XXI.

Why rode she down that craggy height,
Thus all alone, at dead of night,
 Through forests dim and damp,
Unguided on her darksome way
By moon, or star, or any ray
 Except the glow-worm's lamp,—
Yet lighted by an inward flame
That led her, in her father's name,
 To seek her lover's camp?

XXII.

She was a woman wise and true,
And with a woman's wit she knew
 By something in her breast,
That Guy of Teck, her father's foe,
Sought not her father's overthrow;—
 For well the daughter guessed
That the rich suitor for her hand
Had little need of Berthold's land,
 Or tower, or treasure-chest!

XXIII.

Why else had such a gallant knight
Forborne to storm the castle's height?
 Why had the courtly foe,
With twenty captains in the field,
Sat idly by, with sword and shield,
 Nor ever struck a blow,
Nor aimed a ball against the wall?
—She knew the meaning of it all—
 For love is quick to know!

XXIV.

Now Vola's slightest nod or beck
Was will and law to Guy of Teck;
 For he had kist her hand,
And kist her brow, and kist her mouth!
—And not in all the west or south,—
 No, not in all the land,—
Was there a maid whom he adored
Save her whom he must woo with sword
 And win with armed band!

XXV.

Ere yet the war had broken out,—
Alone, on foot, for miles about,
This heavenly-minded maid
Had visited the poor and sick,—
The Angel of the Bailiwick!—
Too pure to be afraid!—
And every child in dorf and dell
Had seen her oft, and knew her well,—
Yet never thus arrayed!

XXVI.

She passed the town of Neuffen by
Just as the sun had lit the sky;
And folk were stirring round;
So to escape their curious gaze,
She had to take untravelled ways,
And follow flinty ground;—
Where oft the Ass would choose the road,—
As if the prudent beast she strode
Knew whither she was bound!

XXVII.

While patting him upon his pelt,
And telling him the hope she felt,
And telling him the fear;—
And while the morning breezes blew,
Which kept her lover's flag in view—
(For now his camp was near)—
Poor Vola, with a maiden shame,
Remembering in what garb she came,
Wished for a woman's gear!

XXVIII.

The cocks were crowing as she went
To Guy of Teck's pavilioned tent;—
And there, in her disguise,
And blushing with her boyish face,
She made a curtsy full of grace;—
And, when he bade her rise,
She gave into her lover's hand
A letter by her sire's command,
With greetings in this wise:

XXIX.

'Lord Teck, thou art—as all men know—
The son of my most ancient foe ;
I fought thy sire of old ;
And *thou*—his heir in land and name—
Now comest rashly here to claim
This castle, my stronghold ;—
Which never was thy sire's by right,
Nor canst thou win it by thy might,
Nor buy it with thy gold !

XXX.

'But woman's love must have its way ;
What sire can say his daughter *may* ?
I am no longer loth
To sign a peace—and I agree
That she who bears this scroll to thee
Shall take thy ring and oath ;—
So Teck and Vola shall be wed,—
And then my tower (when I am dead)
Shall be the fief of both.'

XXXI.

Young Guy of Teck—with lover's eyes—
Saw through the maiden's rude disguise,
And waved his Knights away,—
And said that he alone would speak
With such a lad, so shy and meek :
—And what had Teck to say ?
He clasped the maiden to his breast,
While neither spake, though both confest
What words could not convey !

XXXII.

At last he found a voice, and said,
'The war shall end, nor shall it shed
A drop from any heart !
The castled hill, the tented plain
Shall both be free of gory stain ;
My army shall depart !
I seek not yonder pile of stone—
I seek but thee, and thee alone—
And mine at last thou art !

XXXIII.

'So back to Neuffen-summit ride,
And tell thy sire, O bonny bride,
That I, his son to be,
Agree to quench the angry strife;—
And when thou art my wedded wife,
Our castles twain shall see
Their ancient feud for ever cease,
And there shall reign a sacred peace
Between thy sire and me!'

XXXIV.

Then Vola, on the milk-white Ass,
Toiled upward through the mountain-pass,
That still was wet with dews;
And other dews were on her face;
And, all-impatient at the pace
With which she bore the news,
She switched the Ass, nor let him stop
To bite a thistle, nor to crop
The hollies or the yews!

XXXV.

Her lover to his Knights explained
That though he had no battle gained,
Yet he had won his bride;
And that to fight for just alone
A grey and grimy tower of stone
Would be a foolish pride—
Since Berthold now was old and ill;
And Berthold's fief and castled hill
Were *his* when Berthold died.

XXXVI.

Rebuking then his murmuring men
(Who mocked at marching home agen),
He said that if a *beast*
Had grown so fat on Neuffen hill,
The *men* must there be fatter still,—
And with the gods must feast!—
(Who on Olympus scarce fed higher!)
And that to starve them might require
A dozen years at least!

XXXVII.

'Now God, the Lord of hosts, be praised !'
Old Berthold cried, 'the siege is raised !—
Lord Teck has quit the plain !—
See how his banners march away !
At four-score, I am young to-day !
Our honour hath no stain !
Be blessings on our daughter's head,
For lo ! she cometh, bringing bread !—
See yonder laden wain !'

XXXVIII.

Then trundled in—O welcome sight !—
A wain, which up the mountain-height
Lord Teck had swiftly sent,
With fruit, and wine, and many a cate,
To follow Vola to the gate,
To show his good intent,—
And which old Berthold's famished men,
Beholding, cheered and cheered agen,
A Carnival in Lent !

XXXIX.

There was another feast more grand,
Which every noble in the land
Was bid to as a guest ;
And eagerly they thither sped ;
And all—on their arrival—said,
'At last, from south to west,
Our civil broils are past and done,
For Teck is to be Berthold's son,
And all the land shall rest.'

XL.

The nuptials were in Neuffen-town,—
To which the Bride (they say) rode down
Upon her milk-white beast.
The townsmen gave the Ass, that morn,
Instead of common hay or corn,
A wagon-load (at least)
Of thistle-blooms from Neuffen-hill ;
And, like a guest, he ate his fill
At Vola's wedding-feast.

XLI.

The world (that honours many an ass !)
 Then voted him the public grass,—
 Until, in Neuffen-vale,—
 In clover to his very knees,—
 With whiffs and sniffs of every breeze,—
 The creature, stout and hale,
 Grew like an abbot, round of girth,
 And was the greatest ass on earth!—
 And hereby ends the tale¹.

¹ The tale is variously told. This Ass is a famous figure in the history of the Castle of Hohen Neuffen. The neighbouring villages have some incredible traditions concerning him. For instance, one of these is thus chronicled in Gustav Schwab's work on the Swabian Alps:

'When the fortress was still standing (says Schwab) an ass's foot hung on the wall, in the keeper's second room. This was because, in the olden time, an ass was employed as a water-carrier for the castle. The fortress was once so closely besieged that the garrison were brought to the direst straits from hunger. The ass however, was so well fed that he died from surfeit. The garrison flung his swollen body over the walls to the enemy. When the besiegers, who had hoped to reduce the fortress by starvation, saw this fat carcass, they judged that the garrison must still have an abundance of food. They determined to raise the siege and retire. In grateful remembrance of the Ass of Hohen Neuffen, his foot was hung up, and kept in the castle which he had unwittingly saved from surrender. A woman of wealth, remembering this good service by the ass, endowed for his descendants a pasture-field which is still known as the Ass's meadow.'

Thus far Schwab. But Schwab's tale is less credible and less pleasing than the tradition embodied in the poem: less credible, because if the dead ass had been thrown over the battlements to the besiegers, one of his feet would hardly have made its way back to the keeper's room: less pleasing, because the reader's fancy seems to demand that the ass, after rendering a public service, should receive a public reward. The cruel writers who have killed the Ass of Hohen Neuffen, and who have handled his carcass so rudely, are not to be thanked. The gentle-hearted dame who afterward gave his tribe a meadow in fee simple, deserves that her *name* should be remembered; but only her *dead* survives; pointing the moral how a rich testator may bequeath a fortune and be forgotten, and how an ass may inherit it and be renowned.

It should be added that the stupendous ruins which now crown the summit of Hohen Neuffen are the most commanding and impressive of all the feudal monuments in Swabia: nor, except in Heidelberg, have they a match in all Germany.

QUEEN HORTENSE'S STRANGE NARRATIVE.

Hortense Beauharnais, after her many misfortunes, including her loss of the Crown of Holland, relates to her friends at Malmaison¹ the following incident :—

I.

A PILGRIM on the Rhine, I craved a chance
Of searching the Cathedral of Cologne,
To find the shrine of Marie, Queen of France²,
Whose Buried Heart (that once was Sorrow's own!)
Lies there at peace beneath a nameless stone.

II.

The stone is nameless, for the tramping feet
Of generations, crowding to the Mass,
Have wrought the slow effacement, now complete,
Of all the old inscription, though of brass;
And now the slab is known to none who pass.

III.

Thus was I told. 'But nay,' thought I, 'some trace
Must surely still be left to mark the spot:
For how could she who held so high a place
Be doomed to leave so proud a heart to rot
Within a tomb that is remembered not?'

IV.

To seek this tomb until it should be found
Appeared to me a feasible design,
And I had faith that if I rummaged round,
Though other pilgrims long had missed the shrine,
The luck to find it might at last be mine.

V.

I said, 'I will array me as a nun
(To hide my queenhood from all spying eyes),
And I will venture, after mass is done,
To steal into the church in my disguise,
In hope to kneel where that dear relic lies.'

¹ The once pretty château of Malmaison (in the neighbourhood of Paris) was the favourite country-seat of Napoleon I and Josephine. It remained for years shabby and dilapidated, and was used as a land-office for selling off Josephine's famous flower-garden 'in lots, to suit purchasers.' It was then purchased in 1895 by Monsieur Osiris, who has since expressed his intention of giving it to the nation.

² Marie de Medicis, wife of King Henry IV of France.

VI.

Queen, exile, beggar, and sad widowed wife,
Her Living Heart—now but a lump of clay—
Had known each throbbing joy and grief of life,—
All that the world could give or take away:
And I at such a shrine had need to pray.

VII.

I too had had my rise and overthrow ;
I too had had my glory and my shame ;
I too had thrilled to all a heart could know
Of pride, and wounded love, and blasted fame,
And burning hopes that perished in their flame !

VIII.

Discrowned, I sought the royal nameless shrine
That mocked the vanity of rank and birth,—
There, of the Buried Heart, to ask with mine
What now a world of empires would be worth
To such a wee and shrivelled scrap of earth ?

IX.

In all the awful Temple, vast and still,
No fellow human creature did I meet :
And all alone I wandered at my will,
In solitude so hallowed and so sweet,
That Heaven itself seemed shrined in that retreat !

X.

At first the sun was shining (and his ray
Had been of summer's very brightest glare),
And when at last he sank and slipped away
He filled the Temple with a light so fair,
That I imagined God Himself was there !

XI.

Uprose the moon—whose beams, with many a stain
Of crimson, purple, scarlet and faint gold,
Came flaming down through many a fiery pane,
Kindling the haloes of the Saints of old,
And burnishing the tombs that held their mould.

XII.

I searched where every slanting piebald ray
Slid in its splendour to the stony floor,—
In faith of finding—not yet worn away—
Some tell-tale letter, carven there of yore,
Above the bleeding Heart that bled no more.

XIII.

Then finding none, I whispered with a sigh,
'Oh for a Witch's Wand (if such there be)
Or Rod of Magic to be guided by,
To point me to the spot I wish to see!'
—Whereat a sudden fancy came to me:

XIV.

Thought I, 'This living, suffering heart of mine,
As here I wander sorrowing through the fane,
Will of itself divine the hidden shrine—
For at the spot where Marie's heart hath lain,
My own, on meeting hers, will jump with pain.

XV.

'One heart must know another, if the two
Have each been agonized, and both have bled;
A secret sympathy—from common rue—
Must knit the twain as with a magic thread,
Though one be living and the other dead.'

XVI.

This hope so soothed the dolour in my breast,
So softened what had there become so sore,
So cheered me with the promise of a rest
From what was gnawing at my bosom's core,—
That on I went, more eager than before.

XVII.

On, on I went, where many a sleeper slept—
On, on, through pillared aisle and paven choir;
And ever, as from stone to stone I stepped,
I felt with awe that I was drawing nigher
The hidden holy shrine of my desire.

XVIII.

I walked the length of all the moonlit nave,
With stifled breathing and with stealthy feet;
And all was soundless as the silent grave:
When, of a sudden—was it Fancy's cheat?—
I heard the Buried Heart begin to beat!

XIX.

Is was the saddest sound I ever heard!
Sadder than any mortal sigh or moan!
Sadder than any woe of spoken word!
I could not trace it to a special stone,
Nor could I note the tomb that was its own.

XX.

With shame I say, I was afraid to stay
 In such a strangely-haunted solitude ;
 And turning on my heels I stole away ;
 But all at once the beating was renewed,—
 For while I fled, the panting Heart pursued.

XXI.

It panted like a living thing distressed,
 And then it paused a moment and stood still,—
 Till, as I listened, I became oppressed
 As by a spell—and many a creeping chill
 Passed through me with a palpitating thrill.

XXII.

I thought to see it take a spectral shape—
 Some ghastly form in which a soul appears
 That from the grave hath made a sad escape ;
 But though I saw it not, yet in mine ears
 It throbbed, and filled me with unearthly fears.

XXIII.

Afraid to question it, or speak aloud,
 I chid my trembling self with whispers low,
 Upbraiding my weak courage, thus so cowed :
 'Why is my wit,' thought I, 'so dull and slow ?
 —This heart was dust and ashes long ago ;

XXIV.

'And how can dust and ashes be alive ?
 My fancy by my fear is wrought upon !
 The soul—the soul immortal—must survive ;
 But can a fleshly heart keep beating on
 When pulse and blood and vital breath are gone ?

XXV.

'Yet since the dead,' thought I, 'are still unrisen,—
 Since each, with folded hands upon his breast,
 Is still a captive in his stony prison,—
 Might not a Buried Heart that died unblest
 Have liberty to rise before the rest ?'

XXVI.

But every question woke a doleful doubt,
 And every doubt begat a dismal fear ;
 Till down I knelt to breathe a prayer devout—
 Whereat the beating grew so loud and near
 That up I leapt, and stood attent to hear.

XXVII.

'Make known the meaning of thy moan,' I said,
'For *I*, like *thee*, have tasted human woe;
And if thou bring a message from the dead,
Whether from Heaven above or Hell below,
Whatever it may be, I fain would know.'

XXVIII.

The beating Heart that held me so in thrall
Then beat the louder; till the beaten air
Shook every shining pane and dusky wall
And carven pillar—whilst I listened there
To hear what message it was now to bear.

XXIX.

I waited till I feared that I should faint!
The Blessed Virgin in her rosy bower,
And huge Saint Christopher, and every saint,
And all the Triple Kings within the Tower,
Seemed staring at me in that stilly hour!

XXX.

Thus spake the Buried Heart from out its tomb:
'Begone O breaker of my tranquil rest!
Betray me not—but leave me to my doom;
For whether Life or Death be curst or blest,
In spite of curse or blessing, Death is best!'

XXXI.

Thus did it speak; and though it spake no more,
Yet, while the silent moonbeams round me fell,
I heard it panting nearer than before—
Nearer and louder—beating like a knell!
And forth I hurried to escape the spell.

XXXII.

Down the long aisle, and through the mighty door—
Away from sepulchres and dead men's bones—
Into the open air of Heaven once more—
I ran like mad—and all the while the moans
Seemed to pursue me with their panting tones!

XXXIII.

The spell still bound me with its icy chain—
Still froze me from my fingers to my feet—
Still numbed the very thoughts within my brain;
Nor did I guess till I was in the street
That mine—mine only—was the heart that beat!

XXXIV.

I laughed a moment at my silly fright,
And felt as having wakened from a dream
And shaken off an ogre or a sprite
Or horrid nightmare—yet forsooth, I deem
My search not half so vain as it may seem :

XXXV.

For sure am I that, by a happy chance,
The slab I knelt on was the very stone
That hides the Heart of Marie, Queen of France¹,—
Since now her Buried Heart forewarns my own
That peace awaits me in the grave alone !

HARLEM HEIGHTS.

(A Mid-Winter's Tale.)

I.

I WAITED ! Her sleigh-bells tinkled—
I winced ! for her sleigh flew by,—
And frostily on me twinkled
A fire in her scornful eye !

II.

She looked as I oft had seen her,—
How pitiless, and how proud !
Yet, spite of her cold demeanour,
I lifted my hat and bowed.

III.

My puzzle at first was whether
She nodded her haughty head ;—
Or was it her ostrich-feather
That shook in the wind instead ?

¹ Marie de Medicis, widow of Henry IV, died at Cologne in the year 1642, and her burial-place in the Cathedral is still an object of inquiry by tourists ; but the story that her heart is lying somewhere in the nave, beautifully lodged in a casket designed by Rubens the artist, is probably a fancy—plausibly based on the well-known fact that Rubens—who possessed princely wealth—was generous to the ex-Queen during the poverty of her closing years.

IV.

Her fad was her dextrous driving,
And often she drove alone,—
And *I* had been long contriving
To make my devotion known.

V.

Now just as my pulse was heightened
At seeing her flout me so,
Her frolicsome horse grew frightened *d*,—
Upsetting her in the snow!

VI.

I sprang to the screaming beauty—
(More beautiful in distress!)—
And did what I thought my duty—
(Exultingly, I confess!)

VII.

I chuckled to see her flounder
So deep in the feathery drift,—
And, folding my arms around her,
I gave her a loving lift!

VIII.

She chillingly chid my boldness,—
And yet (it was plain to see)
The snow was the only coldness
Between the coquette and me!

IX.

She thawed,—and we had our wedding;
And ever since then my bride,—
In even our hardest sledding,—
Has wanted me at her side.



*THE FATE OF FRISCHLIN*¹.

Scene—Urach Castle, South Germany.

Time—Sunday night, November 29, A. D. 1590.

I.

I WANDERED far, with happy feet,
In lands beyond the sea,
Through forest dim, and meadow sweet,
And haunt of bird and bee,
And found the greenest spot of all
By Urach's whispering waterfall.

II.

The ruins of a castle old
Crown Urach's craggy height,
Where many a robber-baron bold
Fought many a lawless fight,—
Though now the brawler and the brawl
Are in oblivion, one and all.

III.

But pilgrims, as they climb the hill
To overlook the vale,
Repeat the name of Frischlin still,
And tell the piteous tale
Of how the captive singer sweet
Loved Swabia, and loved Marguerite.

IV.

That was his country; this, his wife;
For, with a lover's oath,
The poet pledged his heart and life
With equal vows to both;
And both he loved with equal fire,
And both he honoured with his lyre.

V.

Dame Marguerite had golden hair,
And when it was unbound
It streamed upon the windy air,
Or trailed upon the ground;
Or if she braided it instead,
It four times wound around her head.

¹ This was Professor Nicholas Frischlin, of the University of Tübingen. The narrative is true. A biographical notice of the hero is given at the close of the ballad.

VI.

She was a matron fair to see,
A wife whose heart was kind,
And (as a poet's mate should be)
A comrade of his mind;
And often by the mountain-brook
They sat and read the selfsame book.

VII.

For whether it were Christian tome,
Or Talmud of the Jew,
Or pagan lay of Greece or Rome,
Or fable old or new,
Yet side by side they read the scroll
Till twain grew one in mind and soul.

VIII.

Fate severed them by bolt and bar,
By stony wall and door;
For luckless was a poet's star
Who smote, in days of yore,
His ringing harp with daring hand
Against the tyrants of the land!

IX.

Brave Frischlin, with a soul free-born,
Defiant of his fate,
And ever answering scorn with scorn,
And rendering hate for hate,
Cared little how his word might sting
The duke, the margrave, or the king.

X.

Though others cringed, and others knelt,
And others wore the yoke,
Yet *he* was of the few who felt,—
And *he*, the one who spoke;
But woe to one whose wit is free,
And speaks against the powers that be!

XI.

A tongue that smiteth like a sword,
What despot can endure?
The poet lashed each haughty lord
Who trampled on the poor!—
And since he told the truth so well,
They bade him tell it in a cell!

XII.

His dungeon was not underground,
But halfway up the sky;
Nor needed it a moat profound,
Since from his window high
He watched the cattle come and go
That browsed a thousand feet below.

XIII.

Imprisoned in the upper air,
He wistfully looked down
Until the dame with golden hair
Looked upward from the town;
And ever as their glances met,
They knew each other's eyes were wet.

XIV.

The livelong summer rolled away,
And wintry tempests blew,
And flying clouds made dark the day,
And hazes hid the view,
And weary grew each lover's lot,
Who gazed, yet saw each other not.

XV.

A day and night there fell a snow
That drifted in its fall
Till all the ledge that lay below
The lofty castle-wall
Was hid in drifts a fathom deep,
That feathered all the jagged steep.

XVI.

The captive, from his lofty tower,
Looked out upon the night
And saw in such a stormy hour
A happy chance of flight;
For what will not a captive dare,
Inspired by frenzy and despair?

XVII.

The scanty blankets of his bed,
He tore with teeth and hands;
And, strip by strip, and shred by shred,
He tied them into strands,
And twined the strands into a rope,---
Whereon to hang a prisoner's hope!

XVIII.

The sentries, as they paced their rounds
Upon the ramparts high,
Or as they paused to hear the sounds
Of gusts that rattled by,
Heard not the prisoner's muffled stroke,
Who beat his bars until they broke !

XIX.

Nor saw they on the dangling cord
The prisoner's dauntless self,
Who swung to every gust that roared
Above the rocky shelf,
And tried in vain to find a place
For foothold on its slippery base !

XX.

The line had either lacked the length
To reach the jutting edge,—
Or else had frayed away its strength
Against the cutting ledge,—
And so—too fragile for his weight,
It broke, and dropt him to his fate !

XXI.

From rock to rock he slipt and fell,—
Down, down a thousand feet,—
Till, at the bottom of the dell,
The snow,—his winding-sheet !—
That whitened round him as he went !—
With many a blood-stain was besprent.

XXII.

And peasants say, there since have grown
Strange flowers upon the spot ;—
And many a maiden comes alone
To see but pluck them not ;—
And when she hears the wind go by,
She calls it Marguerite's sad sigh.

XXIII.

A crumbled heap of stones and lime
Are Urach's castle-walls,—
A beauteous ruin,—as in time
Shall be all tyrants' halls !—
And nought preserves the castle's fame
Except alone its captive's name !

XXIV.

The singer perished, but his song,—
 As of a mountain-bird!—
 Went on re-echoing loud and long,
 And through the land was heard,
 Till they who heard it, rose and broke,
 In Freedom's name, the tyrant's yoke!

XXV.

What nobler soul on Earth can be,
 Or in the Heavens above,
 Than one who lives for Liberty,
 And one who dies for Love?
 And since this nobleness was thine,
 Accept, O Bard, this lay of mine!¹

¹ Nicolas Frischlin was a wit, linguist, poet, and professor in the University of Tübingen, in the sixteenth century. His biography has been elaborately written by a still more celebrated Tübingen professor in the nineteenth; namely, David Strauss, author of the well-known *Life of Jesus*. Until the appearance of Strauss's biography, Frischlin and his devoted wife had lived in the Swabian imagination as the heroic figures of a popular tradition. Exact history has in this case, as in that of William Tell (and in other instances), done away with some of the picturesque features of the original folk-lore. The tradition (or one form of it) is given in the poem. The sifted historical facts may be briefly added here.

The brilliant young Frischlin, who at twenty years of age filled the chair of *Belles Lettres*, was a proud son of the people, and refused to be ranked as the inferior of ignorant noblemen who could not write their names. He proclaimed the revolutionary doctrine that if Swabia must have an aristocracy, it should be an aristocracy of merit, and not of birth. He was profuse in his sarcasms at the pretentious nobility, and he won great applause from the oppressed plebeians.

He soon raised up for himself a host of enemies among the rich, and a host of friends among the poor. But while his enemies were ever ready to do him harm, his friends were seldom able to render him help. He thus acquired a perilous celebrity, and was everywhere an object of envy for his genius and scholarship, and of hatred for his unsparing attacks on the privileged classes.

Strange to say, his chief opponent was a member of his own University—his fellow-professor Crusius; who, having been once Frischlin's teacher, could not brook to be so soon eclipsed by his quondam pupil. At least, so it was charged,—and perhaps with some measure of truth. At all events, whether from professional jealousy or some more occult cause, an angry rivalry arose between the elder and the younger professor. They lampooned each other with speech and pen, book and epigram.

It was a controversy of great learning and small courtesy. To quote at this late day what either said of the other would be no favour to the present reader. A more welcome specimen of Frischlin's wit will be found in the following translation of a satire which he wrote against

TAVERN-KEEPERS.

(*Hiram soliloquizes, and is overheard by Sichar.*)

HIRAM. Full many a thief and robber have I seen hung, yet none who so well deserve the rope as the knaves who are called tavern-keepers; for

thieves steal by night, and in darkness; highwaymen plunder in lonesome woods; but publicans attack travellers ostentatiously, and rob them in broad day. Against such plunderers there is no defence. But why do they blazon their signboards with names which unwittingly confess what sort of rogues they are? One hangs out a Raven, and another an Eagle: because with raven's beak and eagle's claws they mean to snatch the money of their guests. Some put up Bears, Lions, and Swine—as tokens that they themselves are voracious, thieving, and filthy. Some parade Oxen and Stags—which is evidence of their instinct for hooking. Then there is the Goat—to represent ill manners and bad smells. Then too the Peacock, for pride. And there are Hens, Geese, and Swans—all to indicate that, like these birds, the guests will be pitilessly plucked.

SICHAR (*aside*). This fellow seems to understand well these symbolical signs.

HIRAM. The sign of the Crown means that the landlord is after the crowns in other people's pockets. A Sword-blade, or a Dagger, signifies—Here is a cut-throat!

SICHAR. If this fellow were an artist, he would be the best painter of tavern-signs.

HIRAM. The most honest publican is the chap who chooses the sign of Hell—as much as to say, Here you have the Devil himself!

—It is not strange that the writer of the above satire, when he chose to point his pen against the illiterate and tyrannous nobles, should have been equally unsparing. For instance, he said:

'What an empty pride it is that makes them call no one noble who cannot show a rusty, dusty escutcheon! And yet the most ignorant of the nobility are put far above the most cultivated men—in the palace—in the court of justice—and in all places of honour.'

Such utterances were exasperating, and could not be made with safety in those days.

Accordingly, on the 15th of April, 1590, Frischlin was suddenly arrested in his bed-chamber and hurried off to the high and frowning fortress which now crowns with its crumbling ruins the beautiful crest of Hohen Urach. There was no *habeas corpus* in those rude times. The circumstances of the arrest are thus related by Strauss:

'At night, and during a violent thunderstorm, came five men in a six-horse carriage, and in the Duke's name demanded entrance. It was about 10 o'clock. The armed men surrounded Frischlin while he lay in bed, and ordered him to get up, and go with them. In vain the sick man begged them to let him rest during the night, pledging his word that in the morning he would appear before the nobles and judges, and answer for himself, even to the death. They took him out of bed—bandaged his eyes—and drew a black Spanish cap over his head. They bound him on a horse, and by the light of lanterns and torches led him out of the castle-yard. Frischlin cried out, "Is there no loyal Würtemberger who will tell me whither I am to be taken?"

'He counted all the brooks which he crossed, hoping thereby to discover the direction of this journey.

'Chance helped him to this knowledge.

'In passing by Gretzingen at early dawn, a peasant in a wagon met the party.

"Where did you come from?" asked one of the captors.

"From Urach," was the reply; which gave the prisoner the first hint of his destination.'

—Frischlin's treatment in his dungeon was severe. At first he was denied pen, ink, and paper. He was then given two quires of writing-paper, which he quickly consumed in writing letters to his wife—the fair Marguerite whose devotion to her husband is one of the cherished associations of Hohen Urach.

Afterwards, the prisoner is found thanking his keepers for more writing-materials—'without which,' he says, 'I could not live.'

He busied himself with literary composition; the fruits of his prison-labours being a long poem called 'The Hebrais,' together with a comedy entitled 'Susanna,' and a translation of the Psalms of David into Latin.

After his first month's imprisonment, his hair turned grey.

He was then in his forty-third year.

'The thought of my wife,' said he, 'prevents my sleep'

This beautiful and devoted woman made many attempts to interest influential persons in the prisoner's behalf; and she parted with her jewels and personal ornaments to purchase the intercession of a court officer;—a fee spent in vain.

In one of her letters to the authorities she petitions to be allowed to send her husband some needful clothing, and some comforting books; calling him endearingly her 'chief treasure in this world.'

In the beginning of November (after half a year's durance) he had an interview with his aged mother in his cell; who urged him to make his peace with the offended nobles.

What answer he made to her he did not record; for his pen was unexpectedly at the end of its labours for ever.

He suddenly met a tragic death in a brave effort to escape.

His plan was to lower himself from his window by a long cord to a ledge of rocks far below. But this cord was not a rope. It was a line which he made by tearing into strips his clothing and blankets. On Sunday night, November 29, 1590, he fastened one end of the line to his window sill, flung the rest out of the window, and attempted—'hand under hand,' like a sailor on a halyard—to let himself down into liberty; but instead, he unfortunately fell and dashed out his life. His dead body was found on the rocks next morning, mangled almost beyond recognition.

The details of his fall are not known. The conjectures are numerous: one of which is, that the line broke; another, that it was too short; another, that he lost his grip; and another, that he missed his foothold.

Strauss could not ascertain in which wing of the castle the prisoner was confined, and therefore could not determine on which side of the mountain he tried to descend. Visitors to the ruins are now told that Frischlin's cell faced the north. This story is plausible; for if a stone be dropped from the cell that is supposed to be his, it will strike the ledge below, glance off, and roll to the bottom of the valley.

The victim's wounds are circumstantially stated to have been:—the neck broken—the cheeks destroyed—the right hand crushed—the right eye gashed—and a rib in the left side broken in two.

His grave is in the churchyard at Urach, and has never had a monument, nor is the spot marked even with his name!

His kindly-hearted biographer says:

'Frischlin's grave,—for which man did nothing,—nature adorned. The most beautiful roses grew above it, and many poets have praised the rosy grave of the bard. Nor did the mountain on which he met his death fail of a mystical sign. A clover-leaf with a dark red spot,—a spot which looked like a blood-stain,—sprang up, and still grows there. When this clover is now transplanted, it will not flourish elsewhere.'

—It is remarkable that Strauss (no believer in miracles!) should lend credence to such an improbable freak of nature; and yet the assertion as to this exclusive and limited species of clover, with no habitat in the rest of the valley, was confirmed on the spot—to the author of the present ballad—by an intelligent student of botany who professed to have carefully examined into the facts.

THE FOOLISH PRAYER.

I.

A DACIAN shepherd—humblest of his race—
Espoused the lowliest of the maids of Thrace.

The pair were poorer than their barren wild,
Till Hope enriched them with a promised child.

At last, between a midnight and a morn,
Beneath their roof of straw, their son was born.

Ecstatic slumber followed childbirth pain,
And heavenly phantoms filled the mother's brain.

II.

'Ye are the Gods!' the happy sleeper cried—
'What errand brings ye to the cradle-side?'

III.

The bright Olympians said, 'We come to Earth
With bounties for thy babe, to bless his birth:

'His birth is humble—what shall we bestow?
What boon, as modest as his lot is low?—

'Thyself, O Mother, for thy child shalt choose:
Ask what thou wilt, and we will not refuse.'

IV.

Quoth she, 'What though he be of humble birth,
He is the fairest babe on all the Earth!

'So grant him Wisdom, Virtue, and Renown!
Make him a Prince, and let him wear a crown!

'Make him a Hero—bravest of the brave—
Loved by a people whom his sword shall save!

'Make him a Bard—whose spirit-stirring strain
Shall charm the weary to forget their pain!

'Make him the noblest man of all who live,
Endowed with all the gifts the Gods can give!'

V.

Thus prayed the Mother—to whose simple mind
Her son appeared the chief of mortal kind.

VI.

The Gods, who love to hear a mother's prayer,
Begrudged no bounty to a babe so fair.

Said Jove, 'I give my sceptre to his hand,
And he shall be a Prince to rule the land.'

Said fiery Mars, 'I give my sword and shield,
And he shall conquer on the battle-field.'

Said bright Apollo, 'He shall have my lyre,
And move the souls of men at his desire.'

VII.

The other Gods each gave the sleeping child
So bright a boon, that in his sleep he smiled.

Around him lay his treasures—sceptre, sword,
Lyre—every gift the mother had implored ;

Never to any of the sons of men
Had the Gods given such bounties until then !

Lest in the dowry there should be a lack,
They gave their All, and went impoverished back !

VIII.

But ere the Gods had reached their heavenly gates,
Down to the hovel flew the Triple Fates.

Around the Babe they crouched—uncanny, old,
Wan-visaged, wrinkled, direful to behold !

The slumbering mother, with a cringe of fear,
Divined what awful presences were near !

And in her sleep she wildly flung her arm
Across her child, to shelter him from harm.

The weak white barrier little could avail
Against the Powers whereat the Heavens turn pale.

The Fates—more sovereign than the Gods in sway—
Snatched from the Babe each precious gift away.

IX.

'The lavish Gods,' cried they, 'are rash to trust
Such treasures to a creature of the dust !

'What need hath *he* of Sceptre, Sword, or Lyre ?
The son shall be a Shepherd—like his sire !

'We give him what is best—a Shepherd's Crook,
To lead his flock beside the meadow-brook.

'We give him toil and hardship—pang and throe,
Hunger and heart-break—poverty and woe!

'These are our gifts, O Mother, for thy son—
And for thyself, we cut the thread we spun.'

X.

Then on the barley-straw that was her bed,
The mother's dream was ended. She was dead!

XI.

Her hopes died with her, and her fears came true :
Her son to manhood, and to sorrow, grew :

No Prince was he, no Hero, and no Bard ;
No proud possessor of the World's regard :

He lived a Shepherd three-score years and ten,
And was the humblest of the sons of men.

At last, between a midnight and a morn,
He died beneath the roof where he was born.

XII.

The Gods—and at their heels the Fates—once more
Came down and entered at the hovel door.

'Ye Fates,' inquired the Gods, 'repent ye not
That ye condemned him to so poor a lot?

'Must *we*, the Gods of Heaven, henceforth forbear
To answer bounteously a Mother's Prayer?'

XIII.

The Fates replied, 'Chide not what we have done :
No mother prayeth wisely for her son.

'Her heart, through over-fondness, is beguiled
To beg all gifts and graces for her child.

'So *we*, the Fates, have in our wisdom willed
That prayers, when foolish, shall go unfulfilled.'



THE RAGGED BARD OF RAMBIN.

In the Middle Ages the Scandinavian village of Ramin, on the Isle of Rügen, in the Baltic Sea, was popularly supposed to be a haunt of gnomes, dwarfs, and fairies.

I.

ERE pious King Olaf
Put under a ban
The pixies and fairies
(If kings ever can !)
An Elf and a Harper
Were master and man.

II.

The Bard was a beggar
And always in rags ;
But deep in the caverns
And high in the crags,
The Elfin had treasures
In boxes and bags.—

III.

‘Good Elf,’ quoth the poet,
‘Thy bounty is free,
And many the boon
Thou hast granted to me,
Yet still I am needy,—
As poets must be.

IV.

‘Three treasures I beg for,
O bountiful Elf,—
A wreath of green laurel,—
A purse full of pelf,—
And also a bride
Who is beauty itself !’

V.

‘Oho !’ cried the Elfin,
‘How greedy are men !
They always are croaking,—
Like frogs in a fen !
How *durst* thou, O beggar,
Come begging agen ?—

VI.

'Thou comest, O minstrel,
As oft as the moon!
I gave thee thy harp—
And thy staff—and thy shoon!
Who giveth too often
Belittles the boon!

VII.

'The laurel thou seekest
Must grow with thy song:
At fair and at market,
Go thrum to the throng:
If few be the plaudits,
Jog further along.

VIII.

'The coin thou implorest
Would buy thee a curse:
Thy gold and thy jewels
Show best in thy verse:
Yet here is a penny
To put in thy purse.

IX.

'But as for a bride,
What a crazy demand?
Think twice ere thou offer
A woman thy hand!
She marries for title—
For house—or for land!

X.

'So I will elect thee
A bride to be thine,—
A fairy of Elfland,—
A daughter of mine,—
Too fair for thy seeing
By sight of the eyne!'

XI.

The Bard took the penny,
And bought him his bread;
He sang himself weary,
And pillowed his head;
He slept, and a maiden
Bent over his bed.

XII.

She dawned on his vision
At dead of the night ;
She danced on his eyelids
With step of a sprite ;
She vanished to Elfland
At peep o' the light.

XIII.

At cock-crow, the minstrel
Went forth on his way ;
He harped, and he chanted,
And sweet was his lay ;
His vision by night
Was his carol by day.

XIV.

But though he was deft
With his voice and his lyre,
Yet where was the village
Or where was the shire
To take him in service
And pay him his hire ?

XV.

He sang to the reapers
Who gathered their grain ;
But dew from their foreheads
Were dripping like rain ;
And none of the toilers
Had time for his strain.

XVI.

He joined a carousal
Of sailors ashore,
Who swaggered around him
And drank as before,
And listened a moment,
But listened no more.

XVII.

He entered where dancers
A festival kept,—
Who called him a novice
And not an adept,
For playing a measure
They never had stept.

XVIII.

He offered his anthem
At wedding and bier,
To sweeten and brighten
The smile and the tear,—
But laughs and weepers
Cared little to hear.

XIX.

At eve he returned
To the Elfin's retreat,
And said, 'I have travelled
And blistered my feet,
Not earning since morning
A mouthful to eat!'

XX.

The Elf, in the moonlight,
With wink of his eye,
Then said to the singer
(Who heard with a sigh),
'The days of the poets
Are over and by!—

XXI.

'Now therefore, with poverty
Pinching thee sharp,—
With people to cavil,
And people to carp,—
O beggarly harper,
Return me thy harp!'

XXII.

'Nay, not for a kingdom!'
The poet replied,
'And prithee, good Elfin,
Return me my bride
Who flitted at daybreak
And fled from my side!—

XXIII.

'And swear by thy beard
Of a century's growth,
To link us in wedlock,
And father us both!—
And call the six planets
To witness thy oath!'

XXIV.

'O bard,' quoth the Elfin,
'I pledge to thee now
My daughter for ever !'
And, lifting his brow,
He called the six planets
To witness his vow.

XXV.

She brought to her bridegroom .
No dowry of gold,
Nor lands and possessions
To have and to hold,
Nor woman's warm body
To clasp and enfold.

XXVI.

She brought to him only
The gifts which a sprite
May bring to a poet
To be his delight,—
A dowry of fancies
By day and by night.

XXVII.

'Go sing,' said her father,
'Agen through the land,—
Thy bride at thy side,
And thy harp in thy hand !
The foolish shall listen—
The wise understand !—

XXVIII.

'Go forth, but return
In a year and a day
To tell how thou farest
For singing thy lay,
And what are the plaudits,
And what is the pay.'

XXIX.

Then near him, and with him,
Invisibly went
The sprite, the fair phantom,
The bride who was sent
To breathe on his spirit
The spell of content.

xxx.

Folk smiled at the rags
Of the bard's gaberdine,
Nor dreamed that beside him,
Albeit unseen,
He had a companion
As fair as a queen.

xxxI.

For had the King's daughters
All galloped that way,
All gowned in their satins
And royal array,—
The bard had a bride
Who was richer than they.

xxxII.

His fair one was fickle,
She went and she came,
Her beauty was changeful
And never the same,
Yet always she kindled
His soul to a flame.

xxxIII.

He sang to the lofty,
He sang to the low;
But whether the multitude
Heeded or no,
The soul of the singer
Was always aglow.

xxxIV.

For whether his music
Was gentle or strong,
Or whether he sang
To himself or the throng,—
Though *he* was the singer,
Yet *she* was the song.

xxxv.

So travelled the troubadour
All the year round;
And when the next daffodils
Spangled the ground,
He sought for the Elfin—
Who could not be found.

XXXVI.

'O where is your father?'
He asked of the bride.
'My father is banished,'
She sadly replied;
'King Olaf has banished
My brothers beside!—

XXXVII.

'Yea, O the indignity!
O the disgrace!
The tyrant has driven
The whole of my race
From here to the uttermost
Region of space!'

XXXVIII.

The terrible tidings
Were only too true:
The King—without warrant—
Or reason—or rue—
Had done as no king
But a tyrant would do:

XXXIX.

The Elves, with their antics
And innocent mirth,
Had all by King Olaf—
With all they were worth
In trinkets and treasures—
Been swept from the earth!

XL.

The bride of the minstrel,
The last of her clan,
In spite of the sentence,
Evaded the ban
By hiding away
In the heart of a man!

XLI.

Deep hid in his bosom,
She whispered and said,
'Now write thee to Elfland
A rune to be read,
To tell how thou lovest
The sprite thou hast wed.

XLII.

'And say that though never
A nymph or a gnome
Can now in the greenwood
Be suffered to roam,
Yet *I* in thy bosom
Have found me a home.

XLIII.

'And say that no fairy
In forest or dell
Has ever been sheltered
Or cherished so well
As *I* by the man
In whose bosom I dwell.'

XLIV.

—What scroll did the poet
Then pin to a tree?
He wrote, 'O thou Elfin,
Wherever thou be,
I, poet and beggar,
Send greeting to thee !

XLV.

'Three treasures I begged for,
O bountiful Elf,—
A wreath of green laurel,
A purse full of pelf,
And also a bride
Who was beauty itself.

XLVI.

'I harped at thy bidding
Through country and town,
Through spring, and through summer,
Till autumn grew brown,
And till from the Northland
The winter came down.

XLVII.

'Ill fareth, O master,
Thy dutiful thrall:
My Wallet is empty:
My Glory is small:
My Bride is my treasure—
My all and in all !

XLVIII.

'She cometh at midnight,
My Vision, my Dream,
My ever sweet Fancy,—
So fair that I deem
All *else* to be nothing,
For *she* is supreme.

XLIX.

'But save for my Fancy,
With wings in the air,
Uplifting my spirit,—
O Elfin, I swear
That else would my poverty
Be my despair!

L.

'My bread, it is bitter—
By charity doled;
My mantle is tattered;
My sandals are old;
My couch is the meadow—
I sleep in the cold.

LI.

'The fate of a minstrel,
O master, is hard:
The lyre is a thing
Of forgotten regard:
The world is no longer
A place for a bard.

LII.

'A world that is sordid,
That dickers and delves,
That banishes fairies,
That banishes elves—
Will by-and-by banish
The poets themselves!'

LIII.

Here ended the writing:
It hung on a yew:
And there it is hanging!
And lo! it is true!
The fools—they are many:
The wise—they are few!

LIV.

—Oh now that King Olaf
Is under the ground,
Ye Elfs, come back
With a skip and a bound!
Come dance till the crickets
Shall join in the round!

LV.

Come dance till the rabbits
And foxes are friends!—
Till children are happy!—
Till poverty ends!—
Till beggars all share
In what Providence sends!

LVI.

Ye Elfs, come back
To the land of your birth!
Come back with your music!
Come back with your mirth!
Come back and bring Charity
Down to the Earth!

A MITHER'S LUVE¹.

From the French of Jean Richepin.

ONCE a luve-sick lad forlorn
Luv'd a lass who gave him scorn.
O tol, lol, lol,
O tol, lol, la.

'Fetch thy mither's heart to me
For my dog to eat,' said she.
O tol, lol, lol, &c.

To his mither's house he sped—
Killed her—snatched her heart—and fled.
O tol, lol, lol, &c.

In his flight he tumbled down,
And the heart rolled on the groun'.
O tol, lol, lol, &c.

¹ As the original was written in *patois*, the translation is given in *patois* also.

As the heart went rolling by,
He could hear it give a cry.

O tol, lol, lol, &c.

Cried the heart—with anguish wild—
'Hast thou hurt thyself, my child?'

O tol, lol, lol.

O tol, lol, la!

THE KING'S WAGER.

SILESIA, A. D. 1305.

I.

THE King, though fond of fighting,
Yet wished his wars to cease,
And said to all his nobles,
'I go to make a peace!

II.

'The Duke,—our haughty neighbour
Against whom we contend,—
Must yield to us his daughter,
And call us son and friend!

III.

'Then shall the father's dukedom
Go with the daughter's hand,
And peace shall knit our borders,
And joy shall fill our land!

IV.

'But since to our petition
The Duke her hand denies,
I go to seek his daughter,
To woo her in disguise!

V.

'They say she mopes and muses,—
And sighs, and dwells apart,—
And turns away her lovers,—
And keeps a virgin heart.

VI.

'But what should make a maiden
Thus sit and muse and mope?
Not love, and yet a longing!
Not love, and yet a hope!

VII.

'Why should the Duke's fair daughter
Climb to her tower and sigh,
Save that her one true lover
Hath not yet ridden by?

VIII.

'*Who* is her one true lover?
What prince of high degree?
A faith is born within me
That *I* alone am he!

IX.

'A thousand crowns I wager
That she is wooed and won,
And joins to-night our wassail
Ere yet the feast be done!

X.

'Prepare ye well the banquet!
Bring costly cates and wine!
The dukedom and the daughter
To-night shall both be mine!

XI.

'Lead forth my saddled stallion,
For I this morn must ride
Full forty miles ere noon-day—
To woo and win the Bride!'

XII.

—They brought his red-roan courser,
A noble Arab steed,
That snorted to his rider,
Who spurred him to his speed.

XIII.

Through highway and through by-way,
From hill-top unto plain,
The stallion bore a rider
Who never checked the rein.

XIV.

Quoth man and maid who saw them,
'Who is it rides so fast?'
For little thought the gazers
It was the King who passed.

XV.

He wore a minstrel's mantle,
He bore a minstrel's lyre,
And from his eyes of azure
He flashed a minstrel's fire.

XVI.

—High stood the sun in heaven :
It was the noon of day :
Around the Duke's strong castle
The shortened shadows lay.

XVII.

The minstrel at the postern
Knocked loud and waited long,
Before the Duke's fair daughter
Would listen to his song.

XVIII.

At last, at his beseeching,
She let the wanderer in ;
But then she blushed with anger
To hear him thus begin :

XIX.

'O fairest of fair maidens,
Men say thy heart is hard ;
Thou scornest high-born wooers
So hear a low-born bard !

XX.

'My heart is broken !—bleeding !—
All for my love of thee !
In day-dreams and in night-dreams
Thou comest unto me !

XXI.

'Thou comest not an angel
From chill and distant skies,
But as a mortal maiden
With passion in thine eyes !

XXII.

'The midnight and the morning,
The evening and the noon,
Are lighted by thy beauty—
Not by the sun and moon.

XXIII.

'Love burneth in thy bosom,
A quenchless vestal fire,—
And *I* am come, thy lover!
And lord of thy desire!

XXIV.

'Chide not the poet's frenzy,
Nor think the minstrel crazed,
For just as on thy beauty
I in my dreams have gazed,—

XXV.

'So by this sign and token
I know that thou of me
Hast had thy dreams and visions,—
And our two fates agree!

XXVI.

'Why standest thou in wonder?
Why dost thou tremble so?
Think not of rank and station!—
Think not of high and low!

XXVII.

'What though thy blood be noble,
And *I* be humbly born?—
Shall then a poet's passion
Yield to a lady's scorn?

XXVIII.

'Thou dwellest in thy castle—
I wander on the moor;
But love, like God who made it,
Knows neither rich nor poor!

XXIX.

'Although the King should woo thee,
And ask thee to his throne,
Yet *I* alone shall win thee—
Yea, lady, *I* alone!

XXX.

'Stamp not thy foot in anger!
Turn not thy head aside!
Wert thou the Queen of Sheba,
Still thou shalt be my bride!

XXXI.

She mocked with merry laughter ;
She knit her brows and frowned ;
She blushed, and sighed, and pondered,
And gazed upon the ground.

XXXII.

'Go hence, audacious singer !
Come hither never more !
Thy song awakes my sorrow—
My heart hath long been sore.

XXXIII.

'But though I dream at midnight,
My dream is not of thee ;
For I am proud and princely—
And so my lord must be.

XXXIV.

'Thou art a wandering minstrel,
And though thy song be sweet,
How could I love a lover
Whose love were so unmeet ?'

XXXV.

—His lips grew white with passion,
His eyes grew black with fire !
—Down on the marble pavement
He dashed his quivering lyre !

XXXVI.

The fragile thing was broken ;
The strings were snapt in twain ;
And then the frenzied minstrel
Wooed in a fiercer strain :

XXXVII.

'O thou elect and chosen,
Whom I have long adored,
Fly hence with thy true lover,
Fly now with thy true lord !'

XXXVIII.

He claspt her to his bosom ;
She trembled, half afraid ;
For never low-born wooer
So wooed a high-born maid.

XXXIX.

She knew not what to answer,
And tried to answer nay,
But ere her lips could say it,
He kist the word away.

XL.

He kist her, and he kist her,
And ever as he kist,
There gathered on her eyelids
A dim and blinding mist.

XLI.

The minstrel was a tempest,—
The maid, a lily-flower
Whose haughty head was humbled
Beneath the wild wind's power!

XLII.

She bent her head!—She gave him
The lily of her hand!—
She mounted with the minstrel
To seek his own far land!

XLIII.

One steed bore both the riders,
And furious was his pace;
One cloak wrapt both the lovers,
Who rode in close embrace.

XLIV.

And thrice a league they galloped,
And thrice a league yet more;
The sun went down behind them,
The moon rose up before.

XLV.

The stars, with timid twinkle,
Came struggling into sight;
And on the red-roan courser
The foam was snowy white.

XLVI.

Through by-way and through highway,
From valley unto hill,
The horse failed not his riders,
But galloped, galloped still.

XLVII.

Quoth man and maid who saw them,
‘Who is it rides so fast?’
And little thought the gazers
It was the King who passed.

XLVIII.

And little knew the lady,
Nor even dreamed or guessed
How royal was the lover
Who held her to his breast.

XLIX.

Quoth she, ‘The ride is weary,
The night is waxing late!’
Quoth he, ‘The ride is ended—
Here halt we at our gate.’

L.

It was a frowning portal,
As huge and grim and old
As if a hundred monarchs
Had made it their stronghold.

LI.

—‘And is it to a dungeon
That thou thy Bride dost bring?’
—‘Not so, my love, we enter
The palace of the King!’

LII.

‘For here the King is keeping
His wedding-feast to-night,
And many a flute is playing,
And many a lamp is bright.

LIII.

‘Yet what avails the music,
Or dance, or all beside?—
The wedding-feast still lacketh
The Bridegroom and the Bride!’

LIV.

—The Palace-gate swung open
At word of his command,—
No more a wandering minstrel,
But monarch of the land.

LV.

From hall to hall resounded
 A merry mad uproar!
 'The King! the King!' they shouted,
 'The King is at the door!'

LVI.

'The King hath won his wager!
 The King hath brought his Bride!'
 —And half a hundred nobles
 Pressed to the lady's side.

LVII.

Then down they knelt before her,
 And kist the soft white hand
 That brought the boon and blessing
 Of Peace to all the Land.¹

MOTHER CYDIPPÉ AND HER TWINS.

B. C. 401.

I.

THERE had been newly wrought in Argos² old
 The Goddess Hera's image³, armed and mailed—
 A triple work of ivory, bronze and gold;
 And ere it yet was finished and unveiled,
 The statue thundered!—while the workmen quaked and
 quailed.

The sun was shining; not a single cloud
 Lay round the mountain-top nor on the sea;
 And yet the thunder-peal was long and loud,
 And hushed the singing-birds on every tree,
 And terrified the timid lambs on every lea.

¹ To look for a strict historical foundation for this ballad would be like searching into the authenticity of the adventures of King Cophetua, or into the identity of the Lord of Burleigh.

² Argos was the most ancient city of Greece.

³ Hera was the Greek name for Juno.

II.

Though Hera's shrine was new, yet Hera's fane
Had stood in Argos for a thousand years:
And always when the priests had prayed for rain,
The answering showers that swelled the barley-ears
Were named by grateful peasants, Hera's pitying tears.
For Hera, by her right as Queen of Heaven,
Could borrow Zeus's thunder when she would,
And strip it of its forked and fiery levin,
And use it gently for the people's good,
Although her mighty voice was oft misunderstood.
There was at times such terror in its tones,
That men who never feared a battle's shock
Would feel the marrow freezing in their bones,
And stand and shiver till their knees would knock—
For Hera's thunderbolt could rive the hardest rock.
Her least displeasure made a world afraid;
And yet she had a tender heart forsooth,
And was the Goddess to whom mothers prayed
Who needed guidance for their sons in youth
To keep them in the ways of innocence and truth.

III.

Now when the rumour ran the region round
That Hera's image had a living voice,
The vineyard-pruners, with a faith profound,
Said, as they pruned their vines, 'Let us rejoice!
It is a promise that our vintage will be choice.'
Said others, 'Nay, some greater blessing still
Awaits us from the Goddess Hera's hand,
For have we not, upon her holy hill,
Upreared to her a monument so grand
That not another like it is in all the land?'
Impatient for the day that had been set
For the unveiling of the finished shrine,
They all declared, 'Some clearer message yet—
Some more intelligible word or sign—
Will then be thundered by those carven lips divine.'

IV.

So Hera, with her temple and her priests,
And with her sacred town above the sea,
And with her thousand years of annual feasts,
Had never yet, in any like degree,
Been honoured and adored as she was now to be.

V.

To get to Hera's feast (which none might miss
Save to be punished by her vengeful frown)
Ten thousand Argives, from all Argolis,
Would have to clamber up to Argos town,
Where stood the new-made image on the mountain's crown.

It was no easy hill for folk to climb;
The height was giddy and the heat severe:
For Hera's feast came always at a time
Which people dreaded as the day drew near—
The very longest, hottest day of all the year¹.

The young, the strong, the lover and his maid
Might go afoot, close at each other's side,
With branches borne above their heads for shade;
But all the old and feeble must provide
Some beast of burden, for they had a need to ride.

So every horse, and mule, and ox, and ass
In all the valley, on that sacred day,
Must trudge to Argos by the mountain-pass
Bestrid of twain or trine—or must convey
A crowd of ten or twenty on a cart or dray.

VI.

Hundreds had started on that festal morn;
Hundreds were starting; hundreds were to start:
Yet one lone woman, wistful and forlorn,
Must stay behind, and lose her precious part
Of that high sacrament, dear to a mother's heart.

VII.

This was Cydippé—in whose wattled cot,
A league from Argos, on the marshy moor,
Her boys beheld her weeping at her lot;
For she was widowed, crippled, old and poor,
With now another hardship harder to endure.

Which was, that this all-hallowed day should dawn,
Yet in her empty byre no beast be found
Whereby her feeble body could be drawn
Across the moor and up the hilly ground
To Hera's feast, to see the thunderous Goddess crowned.

¹ The month of June is named after Juno, or Hera.

Cydippé, who had served in Hera's fane,
 A priestess ere she was a warrior's bride,
 Wished, as the widow of that warrior slain
 (And must a wish so pious be denied?)
 To kneel within the fane once more before she died.

VIII.

Cydippé's sons—her tall and blue-eyed twins,
 Scarce old enough to know a grief or care—
 Too young as yet for down upon their chins,
 Showed in their boyishness a manly air,
 As if their father's soul had fixed its lodgement there.

'Our mother's heart,' said they, 'will surely break,
 If on this crowning day of all the year
 She goes not up to Argos—there to make
 Her offering to the deity austere
 Whom godly Greeks adore with equal love and fear.'
 So whilst the widow sat apart and sighed,
 Her boys (in whispers) taxed each other's wit
 How up the Holy Mountain she might ride;
 And on a happy plan they chanced to hit
 That needed neither beast nor bridle, rein nor bit.

IX.

'But ere we tell our mother our design
 We first will go and beg of her,' quoth they,
 'The mortal boon that is the most Divine—
 A mother's blessing—which, the Sibyls say,
 Once given on Earth, not Heaven itself can take away.'

X.

They knelt before her, one at either knee,
 And she, in silence, laid on either head
 A wrinkled hand, and blessed them tenderly,
 Dropping a tear in memory of the dead:
 Then, giving to the living each a kiss, she said:
 'Go ye, my lads, and leave me here behind;
 I am too old to climb so high a hill:
 Go ye and pray the Goddess to be kind
 To her old servant who would serve her still
 Except for lack of strength, and not for lack of will.'

XI.

Cried they, 'Thou too shalt go, despite thy years;
 For we are strong, and Love makes Labour light;
 And we will yoke ourselves like coupled steers,
 And pull and tug with all our main and might,
 And wheel thee to the very top of Argos height.'

XII.

A sudden rapture lit Cydippé's face
To see her sons show such a filial care :
To whom she said, 'The Goddess of all grace
Will surely, with a boon exceeding rare,
Reward ye both, in answer to a mother's prayer.'

XIII.

Up sprang the boys, and, turning on their heels,
Skipped to the byre, and rigged and trundled thence—
Complete with axle and a pair of wheels—
A battle-car, which, like a thing of sense,
Groaned, and a cloud of dust rose from it thick and dense:
And off flew fowls—for fowls had built their nests
In that old vehicle for twenty years ;
And now the terror in their fluttering breasts
Burst forth in that half-cackle which one hears
Shrilling along a barnyard when a hawk appears.

XIV.

The Chariot was the ponderous battle-car
From which Cydippé's lord had long ago
(A Doric warrior in the Spartan war¹)
Hurled many a fatal javelin at the foe,
Till by a Spartan spear he was himself laid low.
(For merciless had been that civil feud,
That long and useless internecine strife,
Which brought Cydippé to her widowhood
Ere she had hardly been a year a wife,
And doomed her to a hut of poverty for life.)

XV.

Into the creaking car, in skittish fear,
The widow clambered with unsteady feet,
Bid by her boys to be their charioteer ;
Whilst *they*, in mirth, kept up a gay conceit
Of prancing like a pair of battle-steeds from Crete.

XVI.

The lads across their shoulders slung a beam
Cut from a cornel-tree, a sapling tough,
And equal to the strain ; nor did they deem
The yoke too galling, or the road too rough,
In serving her whom they could never serve enough.

¹ This was the civil war that culminated in the famous battle of Mantinea, in which the Argives were defeated by the Spartans, B.C. 418.

A league they dragged her through the level plain,
Still laughing at their labour as a jest;
But soon their mirth was sobered into pain,
As each, with tightening lips and panting breast,
Tugged in fierce silence up the mountain's flinty crest.

XVII.

Great was the wonderment on Argos height,
And loud the cheer that from the people broke
When old Cydippé slowly wheeled in sight,
Drawn by her twins, re-twinned beneath their yoke;
And thus the kneeling matron to the Goddess spoke:

'Not for myself, who bow to thee agen,
Crave I a blessing, being doubly blest,—
But oh, of all the gifts of Heaven to men,
Grant to these boys of mine, at my behest,
Whatever boon is for their tender youth the best.'

XVIII.

Now on that sultry night, on beds of straw,
Ten thousand Argives slept on Argos hill;
But not Cydippé—who, with holy awe,
Sat up and watched; for when the camp grew still
She hoped for some new token of the Heavenly will.

XIX.

At last, a crash of thunder rent the air!
Whereat Cydippé, with a smothered cry,
Said, 'It is midnight: Hera hears my prayer!
She is herself a mother, and draws nigh
To tell me that a mother's prayer is heard on high.'

XX.

Cydippé, wondering if the thunderstroke
Had roused her sleeping twins, on tiptoe stepped
To where they lay, to see if they awoke.
—Little she guessed, as back agen she crept,
That Hera's thunderbolt had slain them while they slept!

Cydippé in the morning called them not:
'Nay, let them slumber long,' she softly said;
'Their toil of yesterday was hard and hot.'
But when at last she hobbled to their bed,
The horror-stricken mother found her darlings dead.

XXI.

On all the town of Argos fell a gloom,
 And people cavilled that so good a dame
 Should lose such noble boys by such a doom,
 And said, 'The cruel Goddess is to blame!'
 And for her murderous bolt they cursed her holy name.
 And some made threats to overthrow her shrine
 And fling her image headlong down the hill!
 'Is *she*,' they cried, 'a Goddess? *She* divine
 Who thus can find it in her heart to kill
 Such innocents, who never wrought or thought an ill?'

XXII.

But the sad mother of those lumps of clay
 Laid once agen a hand on either head,
 And kissed her darlings in the same old way
 (As if to *her* indeed they were not dead),
 And lifting up to Heaven her broken voice, she said:
 'O thou dread Goddess, whom I still adore,
 I think not of thy wrath, but of thy ruth;
 For every childless mother evermore,
 Through all the world, shall know by me the truth.
 That children, to be blest the most, must die in youth.'

EBERHART IM BART.

(Or, 'OF THE BEARD.')

Württemberg, A.D. 1445-1496.

I.

IN Urach's ancient ducal hall
 There hangs a portrait on the wall,
 Of Swabia's Duke, the loved—the feared—
 The hero of the mighty beard—
 The beard renowned in Swabian song
 As having been a half-mile long—
 Great Eberhart Im Bart,
 Pride of the Swabian heart.

II.

He was the Duke who, when denied
 Chief place at Council-board, replied,
 'My lords, this petty, poor debate
 Postpones the business of the State;

If *you* will do some useful thing
To serve the Country and the King,
 I am content, by Jove,
To sit behind the stove !'

III.

He was the Duke whose pious spouse,
Big Barbara of his faithful vows,
By heaven and earth was marvelled at
For growing so in grace and fat,
That when she went to church to pray
It took a dozen carls, they say,
 Or score, or thereabout,
To lift her in and out !

IV.

He was the Duke who killed the Boar
Which none had dared attack before,
Till in a wild and lonely place,
Unarmed, he met him face to face,
And smote him as with Samson's fist,
And wrenched his jaw with such a twist
 That he the monster slew
 (If either tale be true !)

V.

He was the Duke who gave renown
To Tübingen's time-honoured town,
Wherein he fixed the classic seat
Where Swabia's students daily meet,
And where, in meeting, ere they part,—
In memory still of Eberhart
 Each day of all the year
 They swig their Swabian beer !

VI.

He was the Duke who laid his sword
Upon the Tomb of Christ the Lord,
And vowed a vow as Christian Knight
To battle for the truth and right,—
To help the weak against the strong,—
To rid his realm of every wrong,—
 And who, in letters fair,
 Wrote on his shield, 'I DARE !'

VII.

He was the Duke whose narrow land
 So broadened underneath his hand
 That as his Coronet passed down
 It grew and brightened to a Crown ;—
 Nor has there reigned in Swabia since
 A King so royal as the Prince
 Who, with so small a State,
 Made it so proud and great.

VIII.

He was the Duke who made the boast
 That he, without his armèd host,
 Without his sword, without his helm,
 Could ride alone through all his realm,—
 And, if he chanced to lack a bed,
 Could safely couch his weary head
 And sweetly take his nap
 In any Peasant's Lap.

IX.

He was the Duke whose Oaken Chair
 With curious carvings, quaint and rare,
 (Which pilgrims travel many a mile
 To gaze at in the old church-aisle)—
 Stands empty, and will so remain ;
 For Kings no longer rule but reign !
 —What Prince to-day is fit
 In such a Chair to sit ?

X.

All hail the future age that brings
 An end to Lords and Dukes and Kings !—
 And welcome be the casting down
 Of Sword, of Sceptre, and of Crown !—
 Yet till the coming of the day
 When these from earth shall pass away,—
 If princes there must be,
 Let them be such as he !¹

¹ Eberhart Im Bart (or, 'of the beard') is the national hero of Swabia—the Washington of Württemberg. He was born in the Castle of Urach, December 11th, 1445. At the age of fourteen he lost his father, who left the lad's uncle, Count Ulrich, to be regent of the county till young Eberhart's majority. But the ambitious boy—like the present King of Servia!—found a way to get hold of his inheritance before the time. He had an old head on young shoulders ; and, acting as his own regent, he governed as a youth with the success of a man. Attaining his majority, he became

THE MEADOW OF ASPHODEL.

I.

I TOSSED in a fever on my bed
And bitterly railed at life, and said,
'I would to the Gods that I were dead!'

I slept and dreamed of the Vale below,
Where Lethé's waters are feigned to flow,
And whither the dead are doomed to go.

I heard in my dream a brazen sound,
The toll of a bell! I gazed around
At mourners bearing me to my mound!

And under my mound, alive and well,
I sank to the place that some call Hell,
And others the Meadow of Asphodel;

a Crusader, and consecrated his sword at Jerusalem. On his return from the Holy Land, he founded in 1477 the University of Tübingen, which is, to this day, his living monument. In 1488 he was chosen the Chief of the Swabian League, an organization to promote the union and consolidation of the petty principdoms and bishoprics of the land into a central government. In 1495 he was created Duke of Württemberg and Teck—an honour conferred on him at the City of Worms, amid great splendour, at the hands of the German Emperor Maximilian.

During the proceedings a feast was held at which the dukes, landgraves, margraves, and other magnates, were asked by the Emperor to relate the chief and crowning excellence of which their separate provinces could justly boast. Saxony vaunted its mines and metals; Bavaria, its cities and forts; the Rhine Palatinate, its vineyards and wines.

'Swabia,' said Eberhart, 'can brag of no such things; yet I, as its ruler, may more proudly claim that I can safely travel *in* it, and *through* it, by day or night, and if I should anywhere lack a bed, I could trust myself to go to sleep with my head in any peasant's lap.'

In 1496 Duke Eberhart died, and was buried in St. George's Church at Tübingen; and the Emperor Maximilian, on visiting the tomb, said, 'Here lies a prince who was without peer in Germany—one in whose advice I always found wisdom and help.'

Duke Eberhart's historic beard was red—like that of Frederick Barbarossa. It was probably not of excessive length, for a portrait of Eberhart, taken from life (a copy of which was, a few years ago, presented by the late Emperor William the First to the Castle of Urach), shows a beard of no phenomenal proportions. But tradition will probably always keep the Duke's beard growing with his fame, and he is likely to be always called Eberhart Im Bart.

His Chair of State—made of oak and curiously carved—is kept in the Church of St. Amandus at Urach.

A legend exists among the credulous peasantry, who idolize his memory, that he will one day, on some national occasion, rise from his grave, and reappear in Swabia, redressing the grievances of the poorer classes. A reference to this superstition will be found in a lyric in this volume, at page 379, entitled 'The Tomb at Tübingen.'

And others Tophet; and others still
Elysium, Tartarus, Odin's Hill,
Or Pluto's Valley—or what they will,—

According as in their oaths or prayers,
Or hopes or terrors, or griefs or cares,
They speak of it as a bourne of theirs.

II.

—The filmy populace of the place
Approached and felt of my hands and face,
And folded me in a chill embrace.

'O child of the cheerful world,' quoth they,
'How durst thou venture to grope and stray,
So far from the blessed light of day?

'What augury doth the sign denote,
That hither from yonder shore remote
Thou comest, yet not in Charon's boat?

'If thou be Mercury in disguise,
Uplift thy wand and bid us arise,
And lead us back to the shining skies!

'The shining skies! Are they still as blue
As once they were to our mortal view,
Ere Death with his arrow wrought our rue?

'The Sun! Doth he daily rise and set?
The Stars! Do they nightly twinkle yet?
O tell us! for we forget, forget!

'And how does the beautiful Earth now seem?
For we—the quaffers of Lethé's stream—
Forget, as one forgetteth a dream!'

III.

—I answered and said, 'Ye spirits fair,
No wand of Mercury do I bear
To lead ye back to the upper air.

'The Earth is just as it was before;
But I, with a heart grown sick and sore,
Have done with the Earth for evermore!

'To live . . . is hardly a boon at best;
And, weary of life, I long for rest,
And come to tarry among the blest:—

'Among the blest—who have flung aside
The sword, the shield, and the victor's pride,
To rest from the battle and here abide.'

IV.

—'Thou fool!' said Voices of hollow sound,
'Thou comest where rest is never found—
For who is at rest beneath the ground?

'What ghost hath ever a quiet mind?
And what is death but to look behind
And yearn to be back among mankind?

'For here, in this dusky realm below,
We wander bodiless to and fro,
And suffer a strange and novel woe:

'We have a passion that hath no name,
And only the dead can feel its flame—
Desire for the Life from whence we came;

'Desire for the World that once was ours;
Desire for its sunshine and its flowers;
Desire for its temples and its towers:

'Desire in vain! for the dead are dead,
And *what* remaineth, when life is fled,
Save only *desire* of life instead?

'O thou who art warm, whilst *we* are cold,
We fain would live as we lived of old—
With babes to fondle, and flocks to fold,

'And fruits to gather, and sheaves to bind,
And songs to sing, and the merry mind
Which here in the mist we never find!

'We sigh for morn and the mountain-height;
We sigh for eve and the ingle-light;
We sigh for the bliss of sleep at night:

'We long for toil, with its tug and strain;
We long for joy, and even for pain;
We long for love, but we long in vain!

'For spirits can neither smile nor weep,
Nor wearily toil nor sweetly sleep,
But only an endless vigil keep—

'An endless vigil, whose baffled ken
Keeps looking up to the Earth agen,
And longing to live with living men.'

V.

—Then greatly I marvelled thus to learn
That out of the dust of tomb and urn
The dead would fain into life return.

‘Is death no blessing at all?’ I cried;
And some said ‘Never!’ and all replied,
‘O would to the Gods we had not died!’

‘The living have feigned us dwelling here
In gardens of more than Eden’s cheer;
But hardly a desert is half so drear.

‘Our dim eternity is not worth
A single day on the shining Earth—
With music and dancing, wine and mirth!’

‘Go back, O mortal, nor turn thy face
From light and life and the pleasant place
Where dwell the living of all thy race.’

VI.

—Bewildered, I sat me down to think;
I thirsted, and stooped to Lethé’s brink,
But shivered and felt afraid to drink:

I hungered, and hunted round and round
For fig or melon, on tree or ground;
But apples of dust were all I found.

And all the meadow was grey and bare,
And not a lamb was shepherded there,
And not a blossom embalmed the air.

‘Are these th’ Elysian Fields?’ said I,—
‘Then better, I think, are Earth and Sky,
And better for me to live than die!’

VII.

—Then crowded around me every ghost
From all the corners of Pluto’s coast,
Till I was girt with a countless host.

And then they said with a mighty moan,
‘O child of folly, yet wiser grown,
Go back—till a shroud for thee be sewn!’

‘Thy tally of days must be complete
Ere thou have right to thy winding-sheet:
Go back and endure thy fever-heat!’

'Go back, whatever thy pain or ache :
Go back, however thy heart may break ;
Go back, for thy spirit's future sake.

'Go back to thy life, and live it through !
Thy days are evil, and yet are few ;
Thou soon shalt hither return anew.'

VIII.

—Whereat, like a flock of swans in flight,
The phantoms rippled their robes of white,
And said, 'Farewell!' and were out of sight.

My dream was ended—my fever spent—
And forth to my toil I gaily went :
And life was sweet, and my heart content.

And far be the day when toll of bell
Shall herald my ghost to Heaven or Hell
Or doleful Meadow of Asphodel !

*PRINCE HEINRICH'S CARVING-KNIFE.*

A.D. 1105.

I.

THERE never sat, before nor since,
At any festive board,
A carver like the Swabian prince,
Who carved with his keen sword.

II.

Prince Heinrich, with his battle-brand,
And with his train of state,
Had come to claim Slavina's hand,—
But came an hour too late.

III.

It was old Cruco's wedding-day,—
Old Cruco's wedding-feast,—
The Rugian king, whose age (they say)
Was ninety-nine at least.

IV.

There was a difference, it appears,
Between the groom and bride,
Of something more than four-score years,—
And other things beside.

V.

The king drank deep, and dropt asleep,
With chin upon his breast,
And in his nap he failed to keep
An eye upon his guest.

VI.

Prince Heinrich for Slavina fair,—
To gratify her wish,—
Carved with his sword a tit-bit rare,
And dropt it on her dish.

VII.

The morsel which, with weapon keen,
Amid the merry sport,
The Prince thus carved,—to please the Queen,—
Was of no common sort.

VIII.

He carved it not from roasted ox,
Nor suckling of the swine,
Nor ibex of the Switzer rocks,
Nor salmon of the Rhine!

IX.

He carved no loin of fatted calf,
Nor rib of boar or buck,
Nor breast of pheasant, cut in half,
Nor wing of mallard duck.

X.

He carved while other guests caroused,
Yet carved no bird nor lamb,
Nor aught that on the meadows browsed,
Nor in the waters swam.

XI.

In spite of all the groaning board
Slavina would have starved
Except for what Prince Heinrich's sword
So deftly for her carved!

XII.

And hence the tale is yet to tell
Of Heinrich's carving-knife,—
For Heinrich loved the damozel
Just made a dame and wife.

XIII.

Though wedded, she was yet a maid,
Fresh from the altar-rail,
All in her bridal robes arrayed,
But paler than her veil.

XIV.

So though the bride sat down to dine,
She tasted not a thing,
Nor cared for cutlet, chop, nor chine,—
Nor fin, nor leg, nor wing.

XV.

'O beauteous queen, you do not eat,'
Prince Heinrich said to her,
'Now here are many sorts of meat—
Which cut do you prefer?'

XVI.

'The cut which I would relish best,'
The married virgin said,
'Is one a bride should scarce suggest,—
Cut off the bridegroom's head!'

XVII.

Prince Heinrich, without more ado,
Upleaped with sword in hand,—
Obeying like a lover true,
His lady-love's command!

XVIII.

He cut the head off at a blow,
And dropt it on her plate!—
But if she relished it or no,
The stories do not state!

XIX.

They only tell how Heinrich gained
The young queen for his wife,
And how her castle he maintained
With that same carving-knife!¹

¹ The King of the Rugii, Cruco, met his death at the hands of a neighbouring Swabian rival, Prince Heinrich, in a manner which the historian Menzel describes as follows:—

'Cruco's beautiful wife, Salvina, who was deeply enamoured of the youthful Heinrich, entered into a plot, and Cruco was deprived of his head at the banquet-table by a single stroke of the young prince's sword.'

GRANDFATHER SILVERBUCKLE'S 7

(FOR CHILDREN.)

YOU clamorous little darlings
Who gather about my knee
And pester me for a story,
Now what shall the story be?

I happen to know a fable
Not hard to be understood,
And if you will only heed it
Perhaps it will do you good.

When Adam and Eve were little,
You know it was then the rule
That even the smallest children
Should never be late at school.

Yet three little barefoot urchins,
Who started for school one day,
All suddenly took a fancy
To stop on the road to play.

They knew they were very naughty,
For always a voice within
Gives warning to every creature
Who wants to commit a sin.

But always the paths of pleasure
Are tempting to tiny feet,
And off and away the urchins
All ran to a field of wheat.

The wheat being tall, it hid them
As if it had been a screen,
Yet ever the wee transgressors
Were fearful of being seen.

They talked of their plans in whispers
As low as the hum of bees,
And wisely began their pleasure
By not being hard to please.

They gathered the great red poppies,
They hunted the dragon-flies,
They sported till sparks of rapture
Came flashing from all their eyes.



II.

At last the Welf, who had so well
Beat back the Kaiser's power,
And whom no fire or sword could quell,
Was forced by famine, dire and fell,
To yield his town and tower.

III.

'Be *death* the doom,' the Kaiser cried,
'Of traitors black as they,—
And since with such a stubborn pride
They have so long our power defied,
The dogs shall die to-day!—

IV.

'Build twenty gibbets through the town,
And in Saint Peter's name
Hang every mother's son, head down!—
And strip from every dame the gown
That hides her naked shame!'

V.

Now when the herald's trump was blown
Through street and market-square
To make the dreadful sentence known,
All Weinsberg echoed with a groan—
An outcry of despair.

VI.

A woman from the Welf's abode
Rushed forth into the street,
(Half-veiled, to hide her tears that flowed)
And, prostrate where the Kaiser rode,
Fell at his horse's feet.

VII.

The Kaiser loved her once, they say,—
A boyish freak, forsooth,—
Yet down through many an after day
A man can keep, as well he may,
The fancy of his youth.

VIII.

Quoth he, 'Unveil your beauty! Rise!
I swear, upon my life,
I know you by your voice and eyes!
You are the Duchess in disguise!
You are the Welf's own wife!—

IX.

'Now, ere you plead, lest I deny—
Ask nothing for the Welf;
He and his guilty gang must die!—
But, in the name of days gone by,
What ask you for yourself?'

X.

Quoth she, 'If I were wife to *you*,
As I am wife to *him*,
I still would pray you to undo
The death of men so brave and true,—
Oh spare them, life and limb!—

XI.

'And oh, what can you reap or glean
Of glory to your crown,
If I, who might have been your queen,
With all my women should be seen
Sent naked from the town?—

XII.

'What wrong have my poor women done?—
What treason, where or when?
Not *I*—nor *they*—have fired a gun!
The battle which you just have won
Was fought against our *men*.

XIII.

'Our *men* are brave!—they will not care
For gibbet, axe, or brand,—
But oh to us poor *women*, spare
The naked shame of stripping bare
In sight of all your band!'

XIV.

The Kaiser, it must be confessed,
Was of the cynic tribe,—
And it was woman, weak at best,
At whom he cracked his rudest jest,
And aimed his roughest jibe.

XV.

'Is woman's vanity so great,'
Cried he, 'that sack of town,
And fall of house, and doom of mate,
Forbid not woman's tongue to prate
Of frock and smock and gown?

XVI.

'Well, then, in Weinsberg be it told
I grant a woman's prayer!—
Let all the women—young and old—
Go forth—with all their arms can hold,
And all their backs can bear!'

XVII.

The Duchess ran to all her sex,
And shouted as she ran,
'Flee from the ruins and the wrecks!—
But save your lords' and lovers' necks!—
Each woman take a man!'

XVIII.

Despite their anguish, people laughed
On hearing of her scheme,
And said the Duchess must be daft
To hope to overcome by craft
A Kaiser so supreme.

XIX.

O Woman, trust the Triple Fates,
For of the Sisters Three
Each, with a woman's instinct, hates
All women's foes, and kindly waits
On every woman's plea!

XX.

Although the town was given to sack,
Yet with a throbbing breast
Each woman bore upon her back—
Or in her arms—through smoke and rack—
The man she loved the best!

XXI.

The Duchess first, with might and main,
Upbore the Duke himself;
And every woman of her train
Took up her blessing (or her bane!)
And saved a manly Welf.

XXII.

The Kaiser, though by craft beguiled,
Yet felt his pity stirred;—
And watched the train as it defiled
From street to street, and said and smiled,—
'A Kaiser keeps his word!'

XXIII.

It was a panting, tottering throng,
That staggered in its march;
Yet love can make the weakest strong;
And so the women toiled along
From market-place to arch.

XXIV.

Uprose from all the standers-by,—
Alike from foe and friend,—
A peal of laughter to the sky!—
Nor ever shall the echo die
Until the world shall end!

THE PEDAGOGUE OF TIPPERARY.

A. D. 1732.

I.

OLD Conny O'Grattan, the teacher,
When ninety (or near it, forsooth),
Still fancied his wife to be living,—
Although she had died in her youth.

II.

Not only his children had children,
But *these*, in their order, had *theirs*;—
And now they were romping around him,
And piling a pillar of chairs.

III.

Yet little he seemed to be heeding,—
For, all in the midst of the play,
He called to his viewless companion,
And said, 'I have something to say:

IV.

'O dearer than Deedo of Carthage,
And fairer than Hillen of Troy,
I taught ye when ye were a Babby
And I was a Broth of a Boy.

V.

'They tell me that now ye are wrinkled;
But I, being totally blind,
See nivver a blot nor a blemish
In either yer face or yer mind.

VI.

'How well I remimber the school-house,
With holidays twice in the week!
—But, childers! ye make such a racket
I *can't* hear yer grandmother speak!

VII.

'The urchins, my darlint, are noisy,—
And hard to remimber by name,—
And seem to be constantly growing,—
But *ye* are for ivver the same!

VIII.

'Ye nivver, my dear, were a truant,
But always a jutiful lass,—
And *I* was the lucky young masther
Who married the head of the class!

IX.

'And now, as I drowse by the ingle,
I fancy,—I hardly know how,—
That *still* ye are one of the childers,
Instid of their grandmother now!

X.

'The Virgil we studied together
Comes constantly back to my mind,—
For I have been always a bookworm,
And one of the wormiest kind!

XI.

'I nivver had patience with Hillen,
But Deedo was always to me,
O darlint, the beautiful image
Of what I found fairer in *ye*!

XII.

'For Hillen, the jade, was a viper,—
But *ye*, O my Broth of a Bride!
—Yet here was the end of his story,
For here he fell back,—and he died.

THE BESIEGED NUNNERY.

Convent of St. Mary, at Kirchheim, in South Germany, during
February, A.D. 1488.

Stave First.

I.

'MY liege, before your head was grey
You rode to Palestine,
A belted knight, to kneel and pray
At Christ the Lord's own shrine.

II.

'Now you who served our Holy Lord
Upon a foreign shore,
Must draw for Him your valiant sword
Here at your very door.

III.

'For here a worse than Moor or Turk,
Yet bearer of your name,
Now works the Devil's evil work,
And puts the Lord to shame!'

IV.

So spake to old Duke Eberhart
His still more agèd spouse,
Who smiled to see the lightnings dart
Beneath his stormy brows.

V.

The Duke then stroked his mighty beard,
And strode across his hall,
And said, 'The God whom I have feared
Is God the Lord of all!

VI.

'All foes to Him are foes to me
And to my ducal crown,—
And who or what or where they be,
This arm shall strike them down!

VII.

'What though I long have ceased to fight,
Yet I must re-begin,
For there is now a wrong to right,—
Done by my kith and kin!

VIII.

'Who is the villain? Whip him well!
And rub his wounds with sand!
What tidings have you yet to tell?
What scroll is in your hand?'

IX.

'My liege,' she said, 'a Kirchheim nun,
An abbess whom I know,
Hath writ me that your foster-son
Is now your rebel foe!

X.

'Were I his mother—as, thank Heaven,
He is no flesh of mine!—
He should have lashes seven times seven,
And then be washed in brine!

XI.

'Blasphemer of the Holy Rood,
He once in Kirchheim Manse
Held revel with an abbess lewd,
And led the nuns in dance.

XII.

'Once more a traitor to his liege,
He leads his bandits bold,
And holds the nunnery now in siege,
To rob it of its gold.

XIII.

'The brave new abbess guards the lock
And keeps the thieves away,
But she and her beleaguered flock
Eat their last loaf to-day!

XIV.

'The winter-wind is cold and keen,
And they have burnt for fire
Their garden-fence, and altar-screen,
And carvings of the choir.

XV.

'And starved, and frozen, and afraid,
They now appeal to *me*;
But who am *I* to give them aid?—
The aid must come from *thee*!'

Slave Second.

I.

Meanwhile the Duke's rebellious heir
His foster-son, yet foe,
Besieged the convent, camping there
Amid the ice and snow.

II.

Yet little cared he for the cold;
His bivouac fire was bright;
Quoth he, 'Fill high, my comrades bold,
Let us carouse to-night!

III.

'To batter down yon nunnery-wall
Were powder vainly spent;
Waste not a cartridge, nor a ball;
Nor let a bow be bent!

IV.

'For Frost or Famine, soon or late,
I care not which it be,
Must open wide for us the gate,
Or send to us the key.

V.

'The Manse was merrier, years ago,
The night we made our raid,
For many a nun next morn, we know,
Awoke no more a maid.

VI.

'Now let them feel the Devil's curse,
For now they sing and pray,
And when we come to raise a purse,
They bid us ride away!

VII.

'What need have nuns of purse or pelf?
Or wealth of cup and plate?
What need of it hath God himself?
Our need of it is great!

VIII.

'We do not come to clutch it all—
But only to divide!
Sweet foes! we would not breach their wall,
But only break their pride!

IX.

'Let cold and hunger make them smart,
And then, my merry men,
When they have paid us to depart . . .
Why, we will come agen!'

Stave Third.

I.

At dead of night the sisterhood
Were wakened by a cry—
A mighty shout from out the wood
That clad the hill thereby.

II.

Then battle-clamours filled the air,
And clarions made a clang,
And trumpets sounded with a blare,
And all the forest rang.

III.

'O Christ!' exclaimed the sisters pale,
Who stood aghast with fright,
'Shall bolts and bars no more avail,
And must we die to-night?

IV.

'O hark! the wild and savage horde
Are battering down the gate,
And they will put us to the sword--
Or to a fouler fate!'

V.

'My daughters,' cried the abbess grey,
Undaunted by a fear,
'Flee to the altar—kneel and pray--
And God in Heaven will hear.

VI.

'He Who sustains us by His grace
Through hunger and through cold
Will scourge from out His holy place
The thieves as once of old!'

VII.

They prayed like those who think their prayer
Is breathed with dying breath!
Who pray to conquer their despair!—
To triumph over death.

VIII.

The strength for which they prayed, they *felt*—
(For prayer hath wondrous might)
And round about them, as they knelt,
There dawned a gentle light.

IX.

It was the softest, purest ray
That Heaven can send to earth,—
The dawning of a new-born day!—
And blessed was its birth.

X.

It shone upon a thousand spears
Which in the shadowy night
Had pricked the bandit Halberdiers,
And put them all to flight!

XI.

The leaves that scatter when the blast
Upon the forest blows
Fly not so wildly nor so fast
As fled the robber foes.

XII.

But now the frightened nuns within—
(Who ere the flush of dawn
Had trembled at the clash and din)—
Knew not the knaves were gone.

XIII.

So when the rescuers came and knocked,
And not a voice replied,
And the grim gate stood barred and locked,
They burst it open wide.

XIV.

Then rose a shriek that pierced the air,—
For still the nuns, dismayed,
Believed their ravishers were there
With spear and battle-blade.

XV.

And some sank fainting to the floor,
And some amid their fright
Rushed headlong to the broken door
To seek escape by flight.

XVI.

—Instead of death, or shame, or harm,—
Then burst upon their gaze
A sight that quelled their dire alarm,
And turned their prayers to praise!

XVII.

The victors brought a laden wain,
Piled high with bread and wine,
And rolled it forward through the fane
Before Saint Mary's shrine.

XVIII.

No priest was there, no mass was said,
Yet steel-clad, armèd men
Poured out the wine, and brake the bread,
And poured and brake agen.

XIX.

Foremost in all the happy scene,
A man with mighty beard
And shaggy brows and warlike mien
And dinted sword appeared!

XX.

It was old Eberhart the brave,—
The same who in his youth
Had vowed upon the Lord's own grave
To serve the Lord's own truth.

XXI.

And lo! behind the laden wain
His Duchess too was there!—
To whom the Abbess not in vain
Had writ in her despair.

XXII.

'O sovereign Lady,' cried the nun,
'For moving of thy lord
To this good deed which he hath done,
What shall be thy reward?'

XXIII.

'O Abbess, grant me of thy grace,'
 Quoth she, with calm reply,
 'The favour of a burial-place,—
 For I have come to die!'

XXIV.

And when she died, the nuns alone,—
 With help of *no* man's hand,—
 Built to her name a pile of stone
 As Lady of the Land.¹



THE CLOWN'S CHANSONETTE.

(A Burlesque for the Kalamazoo Circus.)

L

NOW listen to my ditty,
 Ye Western belles and beaux!
 No Eastern lays are like it,
 From Pindar's down to Poe's!
 The melody is nasal—
 The subject is the Nose!

¹ The historical facts on which this ballad is founded are given in Heinrich Gebhardt's *History of Kirchheim*, in the following passage:—

'In 1476 Eberhart the Younger, with a band of his roystering companions, visited the cloister and held . . . a dance and a mad revel. Two years later, on account of this carousal, the convent was reformed, and a new abbess appointed. In 1486 Eberhart the Younger made a demand upon the nuns for money. On their refusal he determined to compel them, through hunger, to submit to his extortions. . . . The nuns appealed to Count Eberhart of the Beard. . . . The cloister was so closely besieged that for three months the nuns were obliged to burn all the trees in the convent grounds, and were even thinking of burning the sacred images on the altar. Their food began to fail; but they were resolute, and kept up their spirits by dreams and prophecies. At length Count Eberhart of the Beard came with 4,000 men from Stuttgart, and on the 12th of February, 1488, made himself master of the town and convent, and richly indemnified the nuns for their previous sufferings. . . . The widow of Count Eberhart im Bart, Barbara, Countess of Mantua, was buried here.'

Kirchheim is now a quaint and quiet village a few miles from the ruins of Hohen Neufen and Teck; and the old cloister, or rather the present building on the site of the former, is used as an asylum for poor old women.

II.

O Muse, relate the reason
(There *is* one, I suppose)
Why all the Boston poets,
In all their love-sick throes,
Praise all a Lady's features
Yet never name her Nose!

III.

Her teeth (they say) are pearly;
Her eyes are like the doe's;
Her lips are each a ruby—
Her cheeks are each a rose;
Yet not a Yank remembers
Her necessary Nose!

IV.

Her hair is like the streamlet
That ripples as it flows;
She has a natty ankle
Which naughtily she shows;
She even has a nosegay—
But never has a Nose!

V.

The Muse replies that passion,
However much it glows,
Must never tempt the minstrel
Who sings a maiden's woes
To mention that her tear-drops
Go dripping off her Nose!

VI.

The poet at her pillow
May watch her in a doze,
And soften all her murmurs
To gentle ahs and ohs,—
Yet cannot let her sighings
Go sounding through her Nose!

VII.

Whatever tragic sonnet
The Harvard men compose,—
However high in horror
Their situation grows,—
Their Love may lie-a-bleeding—
But never at her Nose!

VIII.

O sacred Hill of Bunker,
When thy North-easter blows,
What chilly maid in Cambridge
Could lead me to propose,—
If, like the Sphinx of Egypt,
She had a knocked-off Nose?

IX.

O Beacon-street, thy bardlings
May chaunt thy furbelows,—
But Emerson and Longfellow
(And all such boys as those)
Were famous each for knowledge—
And famous each for Nose!

X.

I go my bottom dollar
(Alas! how fast it goes!)
That Christo. Col. of Palos
(Thus writ, for short, in prose)
And B. F. B. of Lowell—
Had each of them a Nose!

XI.

G. Washington I worship,
For walloping his foes!
I love the Pilgrim Fathers,—
All but their fogs and snows,—
But oh, I dread a Yankee
For drawling through his Nose!

XII.

Now I who sing this ditty
Will bring it to a close
By asking of each damsel
In all the three front rows
A kiss by way of payment
For bringing her a Nose!

A BALLAD OF A BABY.

The Wartberg, A.D. 1307.

I.

IT was all a hurry-scurry!
Duke and Duchess in a flurry!
For at last, with hope forlorn,
They had fled—O tale of pity!—
From their sacked and burning city
With their little babe new-born.

II.

When Duke Friedrich,—sore defeated,—
With his flying troops retreated
Through the Neckar's winding vale,
And the foe pursued for slaughter,—
Up from Friedrich's baby-daughter
Rose a faint and moaning wail.

III.

'Now what ails the little being?'
Quoth the sire, as they were fleeing,—
Fleeing wildly, hotly pressed;
And the mother answered, sighing,
'Ah, the little thing is crying,
For she needs her mother's breast.'

IV.

Down the Duke from saddle vaulted,
Shouting, 'Let the troops be halted!—
Let the Furies do their worst!—
Let the country-folk betray us!
Let the conquerors find and slay us!
But the Baby shall be nursed!'

V.

So within a shady hollow,—
Though the foe was soon to follow,—
And to tarry was to die,—
Horse and rider stopt to water,
While the little ducal daughter
Drank her milky fountain dry.

VI.

The pursuers would have chuckled
 Had they seen the baby suckled,
 But they rode another way,
 And they never set their clutches
 On the happy Duke and Duchess,
 For the Baby saved the day!

VII.

Then the fugitives, though routed,
 Yet escaping, laughed and shouted;—
 And they vowed, amid their joy,
 That the babe, for that day's merit,
 Should the ducal crown inherit
 Just as if she were a boy!

VIII.

When at last the child so tender,
 Who had been the land's defender,
 Was a peerless woman grown,—
 Not a flounced and sighing charmer,
 But an Amazon in armour,
 She was Duchess on the throne.¹

—♦—

FIN DE SIÈCLE.

(EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.)

THUS wrote the merry Abbot of Saint Cyr,
 Who came (as many of his order do)
 To Paris in the springtime of the year,
 Without his hood, to spend a week or two:—

¹ Duke Friedrich was a Thuringian of the House of the Hohenstaufen. He married Elizabeth, daughter of his father's mistress. Both women were noted for their beauty, but the daughter so outshone her mother that Horace's famous compliment might have been written expressly for the pair. The Duke was of gigantic stature, as is proven by his huge armour, which is still preserved in the Wartberg. He was besieged by Albrecht, and had to flee from the Wartberg, but the tide of war afterwards turned in his favour, and he recovered his lost lands.

The historical basis for the ballad is given by Rohte as follows:—

'Friedrich was driven from the Wartberg with his new-born daughter, who cried incessantly during the flight. Although the enemy was close at hand, the Duke stopt and asked the nurse what ailed the babe? The nurse replied, "My Lord, she will not be quiet until she is suckled." So he ordered his men to halt, saying, "My child shall have her desire though it cost me all Thuringia"; and, drawing up his men in front, remained by his babe's side until she had been suckled.'

The Wartberg is a watch-tower at Heilbron overlooking the Neckar.

'Dear Padre, through the town a river flows,
And all along the banks on either side
Sit patient anglers, either in a doze,
Or watching bobs that doze upon the tide.

'Full forty thousand hooks from morn till night
Lie baited in the river every day,
Yet hardly once a year a fish will bite,
Or if he does, he always gets away.

'So in this wicked city, O mon frère,
I entertain the hope (if not the wish)
To pass my week as free from every snare
And safe from all temptation as a fish.'

Thus wrote the merry Abbot of Saint Cyr,
Whose hope (if not his wish) was brought to nought,—
For in his innocence, without a fear,
He nibbled at temptation, and was caught.



A PLEA FOR THE SKALD AND HIS RUNES.

I.

THE calm and cloistered poet,
Austere and strict in prayer,
Dwells in the upper air—
If not in Heaven itself, yet just below it.

II.

In spite of men's derision,
Who mock him while he sings,
He tells them of the things
Which he beholds in Valhal, in his vision.

III.

For what know ye, O mortals,
Concerning Gods or Fates,
Save what the skald relates
From glimpses through the high celestial portals?

IV.

Thence with a swift gyration
He wheels his wings below—
Till from the World of Woe
He echoes back its wail and lamentation.

V.

For by what necromancy
 Can mortals guess how dire
 Is the Infernal Fire—
 Save as it sparkles to the poet's fancy?

VI.

What shall his weird recital—
 His kantali¹—his kit²—
 His wisdom—and his wit—
 Earn for the minstrel as his just requital?

VII.

—A laurel not to wither!
 —Ye mortals, crown him well!
 —Your fate is Heaven or Hell
 According as the poet dooms ye thither!

SIC VITA.

I.

AT morn, the bridegroom and the bride
 Walk from the altar, side by side,
 To wander where the world is wide.

II.

At noon, beneath the fiery sun,
 Their journey, though with joy begun,
 Grows weary, and they wish it done.

III.

At night, amid the chilly shade,
 Their welcome pillow, freshly made,
 Is rounded with a pick and spade.

¹⁻² It will be remembered that the kantali is the harp of Finland; the kit, the fiddle of Norway.

*CŒUR-DE-LION TO BERENGARIA*¹.

(The King was in England and the Queen in Sicily.)

O FAR-OFF darling in the South,
 Where grapes are loading down the vine,
 And songs are in the throstle's mouth,
 While love's complaints are here in mine;
 Turn from the blue Tyrrhenian Sea!
 Come back to me! Come back to me!

Here all the Northern skies are cold,
 And in their wintriness they say
 (With warnings by the winds foretold)
 That love may grow as cold as they!
 How ill the omen seems to be!
 Come back to me! Come back to me!

Come back, and bring thy wandering heart—
 Ere yet it be too far estranged!
 Come back, and tell me that thou art
 But little chilled, but little changed!
 O love, my love, I love but thee!
 Come back to me! Come back to me!

I long for thee from morn till night;
 I long for thee from night till morn:
 But love is proud, and any slight
 Can sting it like a piercing thorn!
 My bleeding heart cries out to thee—
 Come back to me! Come back to me!

Come back, and pluck the nettle out;
 Come kiss the wound, or love may die!
 How can my heart endure the doubt?
 Oh, judge its anguish by its cry!
 Its cry goes piercingly to thee—
 Come back to me! Come back to me!

What is to thee the summer long?
 What is to thee the clustered vine?
 What is to thee the throstle's song,
 Who sings of love, but not of mine?
 Oh turn from the Tyrrhenian Sea!
 Come back to me! Come back to me!

¹ King Richard I of England was a troubadour, and the author of many love-songs.

AULD TAM THE GUIDE'S TALE.

A NOVA SCOTIAN ROMANCE.

A. D. 1805.

'STRAIGHT on and up, yer Honour,
The steps are ninety-three;
They take ye to the Lighthouse—
Or where it used to be.

'It was the auldest lighthouse
That stood on all our shore;
The Johnny Crapeaux built it,
And now it stands no more.

'I was the lighthouse-keeper
Afore we built the new;
And weel I kenned the laddie,
And kenned the lassie too.

'Down through the Bay o' Fundy
Had ebbd the mighty tide,
Till all the sunken meadows
Were lying green and wide.

'The tide would soon be turning¹,
When man and beast must flee,
For back would roll a billow,
The mightiest of the sea.

'And woe to the unwary
Who loitered in its path,
For swift would be its rising
And terrible its wrath.

'The sun was in the solstice
Anent the end o' June;
And long afore the sunset
Uprose a watery moon.

'The wave would swell the highest
That day of a' the year,
And I had set my signals
To keep the channel clear.

¹ The tidal rise is sometimes sixty feet, and the tide-wave is called 'the bore.'

'First kem a flock o' sea-mews
A-screaming up the Bay,
In token that the tide-wave
Had started on its way.

'And then the cattle grazing
Along the channel's edge
Began to sniff the danger
And quit the salty sedge.

'And last the fishermidens,
In forty skiffs or more,
Kem rowing a'thegither
And racing to the shore:—

'All but a skiff, whose lassie,
Unnoticed by the rest,
Had snapped an oar asunder
In rounding Cartho Crest.

'This maiden had a lover,
And I could see him stand
A-waiting till her wherry,
With a' the fleet, should land.

'At every tide he met her
Down at the dangerous beach,
To haul her boat for safety
Above the water's reach.

'He was a lad, yer Honour,
To thraw a three-year ox;
Yet he would blush to scarlet
At anything in frocks.

'His blood would always tingle
While pulling Ilsa's rope,—
For what is Toil but rapture
When Love is full o' hope?

'I stood upon my watch-tower
With weather-glass in hand,
And watched while half the Ocean
Kem swirling to the land.

'The other skiffs had landed
Ere Ilsa's was in sight;
Whereat her red-lipped laddie
Turned to a deathly white.

'And first he climbed the Headland,
Where, from the hanging cliff,
He saw the coming billow
But not the missing skiff.

'Then on to where the Lighthouse
Looked westward to the sea
He bounded like a roebuck
And shouted up at me :

"Oh tell me, tell me, watchman,
If through your weather-glass
You spy the two-oared wherry
Rowed by my bonnie lass!"

'I had no heart to tell him ;
Yet roughly I replied,
"I see a skiff, keel upward,
Returning with the tide."

'Nae word he spak in answer,
But flew as if with wings,
And off he tore his tartan
And half his woollen things.

'I shouted, "Stay, O madman !
To leap will be your death !"
But all in vain I warned him,
For I but wasted breath.

'The lad sprang from the summit
Into the swash below !—
For what is Youth but frenzy
When Love is full o' woe ?

'Down in the whirling water
Defying Death and Fate,
And diving like a dolphin,
The lover sought his mate.

'He sought her, and he found her ;
And though the tide-wave rolled
He clasped her to his bosom
And let not go his hold.

'Through Copaquiddy Inlet
The eddy ran them round,
And flung them to the Lime-pit,
And left them safe and sound !

'A wagon-load o' roses
 Were strewn along the way
 To Copaquiddy Chapel
 Upon their wedding-day.

'And Copaquiddy Headland
 Then took a change o' name,—
 For such a deed o' daring
 Deserved a meed o' fame.

'The rock where Tol Macgregor
 Sprang off into the deep
 For love of Ilsa Garvin
 Is called the Lover's Leap.

'And if ye hae a saxpence
 For telling o' the tale,
 I now will pledge yer Honour
 In Nivva Scawtia ale.'



THE SILVER BELL OF STUTTART.

(On the old Church called the Stiftkirche.)

I.

THERE hangs above the giddy height
 Of Stuttgart's tallest tower
 A Silver Bell, in open sight,—
 That gleams through sun and shower,
 And glitters when the moon is bright,
 And rings at nine and twelve at night,
 Yet strikes no other hour.

II.

The town hath bells of louder tongue,
 Some seven or eight, or more;
 But this apart from all is hung,
 Nor mingles in their roar;—
 And quivers after it hath rung,—
 As if a nightingale had sung,
 That all too soon forbore.

III.

To noisy revellers at the bowl
The cadence may be drowned ;
But lovers in their nightly stroll,
The watchman in his round,
The pillowed sick, the wakeful soul,
And all who hark to hear it toll
Are haunted by the sound.

IV.

For though they hear it many a time,
And though they love it well,
And though it hath a merry chime,
As of a wedding-bell,
Yet ever like a gruesome rhyme,
It wakes the memory of a crime—
A very deed of hell.

V.

Who was it gave that silver gift,
That bell as white as snow,—
Which first above the stately Stift
Rang many a year ago,
And which, without a flaw or rift,
Doth still a cheery voice uplift
Above a world of woe ?

VI.

It was Ulrica—she who did
The deed so foul, so famed !—
Whose crime so long a time lay hid,
But was at last proclaimed !—
And yet, poor sufferer, God forbid
That she be now too rudely chid,
Too pitilessly blamed !

VII.

Until her love was ill-repaid,
She never wrought a wrong ;
And though, in jealous rage, the maid
Took vengeance swift and strong,
Yet afterward she wept and prayed,—
And on her quivering flesh she laid
A penance fierce and long.

VIII.

Men say she had the sweetest face
In Swabia ever known,—
Save only for the riper grace
That marked her mother's own;
And they were fairest of their race,
With just the difference one could trace
In bud and rose full-blown.

IX.

Ulrica's sire was in his tomb;
And now her mother dear,—
Close in her castle and her room,—
Had mourned for him a year;
But grief must have an end of gloom;
So on the widow's cheek the bloom
Began to reappear.

X.

The widow, lofty in her rank,
And rich in her domain,
Was Duchess from the Neckar's bank
To Weissenberger plain;—
While at her table ate and drank
The Swiss, the Swabian, and the Frank,—
For all were of her train.

XI.

Then down from every castled height
That guards the Neckar's isles
Came every wifeless duke and knight
Within a hundred miles,—
Who all, like moths that see a light,
Were tempted by her beauty bright
To risk her dangerous smiles.

XII.

A spendthrift youth, Sir Hildebrand,
In fortune's narrow strait,
Rode forth to join the rival band
Who gathered at her gate,—
And since he owned no rood of land,
He wanted, with her heart and hand,
Her castle and estate.

XIII.

And so he crossed the Alpine snows,—
And swam the Neckar's flood;
For neither ice nor tempest froze
The ardour of his blood;
Yet rash was he when first he chose,—
For when he came to pluck the rose,
He more admired the bud!

XIV.

Then, surging through his heart and brain
There swept a swelling tide
As stormy as the billowy main,—
For passion warred with pride;
Till, reckless of his honour's stain,
He wooed the widowed chatelaine,
Yet loved the maid beside!

XV.

From nobles courtly yet uncouth,
From burghers rich yet grey,
The widow turned her to the youth,
And would not say him nay;—
And ere the world had guessed the truth,—
She secretly had set forsooth
Her early wedding-day!

XVI.

Sir Hildebrand, who with a sigh
Then caught her to his breast,
And feigned his love—which with a lie
He oft anew professed)—
Now wished the wedding-day put by;
Yet when she asked the reason why,
He said he did but jest.

XVII.

He put it by a month at first,
And then a month beside;—
And for the maid, he madly nursed
His passion and his pride,—
And secretly,—O love accurst!—
He swore to do his best (or worst)
To make of *her* his bride!

XVIII.

'She is a damsel meek and pure,
Whose heart is fancy-free,
And I shall win her, I am sure,
For I am young,' quoth he,—
'And though she knows that I am poor,
Yet all for love she will endure
All poverty with me.'

XIX.

A dagger dangled from his girth,
Of silver hilt and blade ;—
A weapon which the girl, in mirth,
Would snatch, though half afraid ;—
And since it was a thing of worth,
He marked it with her name and birth,
And gave it to the maid.

XX.

The happy child, with eyes that beamed,
Gazed on the carven haft,
Kist the bright letters as they gleamed,—
Pinned with the silver shaft
Her golden hair—(whose braids, she deemed,
By contrast all the fairer seemed)—
Then blushed, and lightly laughed.

XXI.

Ulrica—save to him who won
Her love so fond and true—
Told her pure passion unto none,
But did as maidens do,—
At least as maidens oft have done,—
Hid it from all beneath the sun !—
And from her mother too !

XXII.

Then said her Lady-mother fair,
'My daughter, search the town,
And choose a satin rich and rare,
And white as eider-down,
And cut it with a cunning care,
And sew for me a robe to wear,
To be my wedding-gown.'

XXIII.

'Thou art as fair,' the girl replied,
'As fitteth thy degree;
And when thy weeds are laid aside,
Still fairer wilt thou be;
So prithee, in thy love and pride,
Sweet mother, when thou art a bride,
Who shall the bridegroom be?'

XXIV.

'My child, I thought thy wit had guessed,—
For he is noble-born,
And holds his head among the best,
And bravely laughs to scorn
The perils which are love's dear test,—
And Holy Church shall make us blest
On happy Easter Morn.'

XXV.

'How can I guess, O mother sweet,
Who is thy bridegroom brave?
For many knights are at thy feet,
Who buffet wind and wave,—
Who ride on coursers strong and fleet,—
Who shine in coats of mail complete,
With crest, and mace, and glaive.'

XXVI.

'My child, I love a youth deprived
Of castle and of land,—
So young, he never yet hath wived,
Yet woos my widowed hand!
The heart is cunningly contrived,
And mine, though dead, has been revived!
I wed Sir Hildebrand!'

XXVII.

Ulrica, when she heard her fate,
Grew hot and then grew cold!
—Now love that turns to sudden hate
Makes timid creatures bold!
The fury of the meek is great!
—The jealous maiden, all irate,
Did what the tales have told.

XXVIII.

The legend runs in many ways:
The truth is hard to know:
For since the deed was done in days
So very long ago,
There rests upon it now a haze,—
As if to dim to human gaze
Its lineaments of woe.

XXIX.

The Duchess had a shady wood
That round her castle lay,—
Where often in her widowhood
She went at dawn of day
To find a solace (if she could)
In prayer,—and daily doing good,—
As Heaven should point the way.

XXX.

So, ever as she went and came,
She scattered golden store
To bless the poor and sick and lame
At many a cottage door;
(For many a proud and high-born dame
So served in Mercy's tender name
In those stern times of yore).

XXXI.

The Duchess, on her bridal day,
At dawn, had disappeared;
Nor came to don her bride's array;
And so her maidens feared
That she had early gone to pray,
And strayed too far, and lost her way
In woods so wild and weird.

XXXII.

Bright through the chapel-window gleamed
The Easter Morning sun;
Into the aisles the people streamed;
The anthem was begun;
The priest—(who waited till he seemed
Vexed and impatient)—little dreamed
That murder had been done!

XXXIII.

The throng, that all the while increased,—
The ringers of the chime,—
The bridegroom, chafing like the priest,—
All tarried for a time:
Yet all in vain! The anthem ceased!
No marriage! and no marriage-feast!
—Yet *no* one guessed the crime.

XXXIV.

How could Ulrica, coy and meek,—
Ulrica, soft and mild,—
Whose heart was tender as her cheek,—
How could so sweet a child
Upon so dear a mother wreak
With tiger's tooth!—with vulture's beak!—
A jealous rage so wild?

XXXV.

It was as if from out the sky
The shyest star should fall,
And hitherward in wrath should fly
To blast the earth's green ball:
A deed with which no deed could vie—
So out of nature that wellnigh
It could not be at all!

XXXVI.

The people scattered to and fro,
With minds foreboding ill,
And hunted high, and hunted low,
And tramped from glen to hill,
And traced the Neckar in its flow,
And went wherever foot could go,—
Until the night grew chill.

XXXVII.

Ulrica, mute and overwrought,
Sat bowed and yet resigned;
She went not forth with those who sought
Whom only *she* could find;
Nor asked if tidings had been brought;
But sat and sat, and thought and thought;
And none could read her mind.

XXXVIII.

Between her hands she claspt her head
With fingers stiff and numb ;
And sat as rigid as the dead,
As silent as the dumb ;
And only once she spake and said,—
'Ye need not spread the bridal-bed
Until the bride shall come !'

XXXIX.

Thus did Ulrica sit and sit,
While many a shout was raised,
And many a signal-light was lit,
And many a bonfire blazed,—
Till, falling in a fainting-fit,
She woke, bewildered in her wit,—
For now her brain was crazed.

XL.

She smiled, and sang a merry song,
And never shed a tear,
And from her window watched the throng
Whose voices she could hear,—
All saying as they tramped along,
'It is a dark and hidden wrong
Which Time alone can clear !'

XLI.

Sir Hildebrand was on the rack,
And scowled with many a frown,
And curst the bride who came not back
To don her wedding-gown,
And swore the Day of Doom should crack
Ere he would follow on her track
A rood from Stuttgart town !

XLII.

He stamped his foot in pride and pique,
And smote his sworded hip,—
Enraged to lose by fortune's freak
A prize within his grip,—
And watched Ulrica, white and weak,
And muttered what he dared not speak,
And bit his nether lip.

XLIII.

'Pale maid,' Sir Hildebrand then said,
'At last the people think
Thy mother hath been three days dead;
For, though none saw her sink,
Yet, on the morn she should have wed—
The footprints of a woman led
Straight to the river's brink!—

XLIV.

'The Neckar's flood is cold and deep,
And is thy mother's tomb;
She will not waken from her sleep;
Thou canst not change her doom!
Why shouldst thou any longer weep?
—Let *us* the marriage-revels keep!
Let *us* be bride and groom!'

XLV.

'O traitor to my mother's shade,
What tempt'st thou me to do?
Go *thou* and lie where *she* is laid,
And *I* will lie there too!
But while I live, I live a maid!—
Who never more shall be betrayed,—
Whom never man shall woo!'

XLVI.

'Lord of thy heart am I!' quoth he,
'Then why not of thy hand?
Fair lily, thou thyself shalt be
The bride of Hildebrand!'
—But when the maiden spurned his plea,
The baffled suitor crossed the sea,
And sought the Holy Land.

XLVII.

Within her virgin solitude,—
Her fever burning high,—
Its flame unquenched, although bedewed
With drops that would not dry,—
Ulrica pushed away her food,
And claspt and kissed the Holy Rood,
And prayed that she might die.

XLVIII.

And now she did so strange a thing
That bards, while they upbraid
The sinning soul of whom they sing,
Yet pause as if afraid
To chide her roughly, or to fling
A venomous and bitter sting
At such a sorrowing maid.

XLIX.

Disrobed of all her silk and lace
And beautiful attire,
She wore not only, in their place,
A hair-cloth, fierce as fire;
But over all her head and face,
For penance, and for hope of grace,
She bound a mask of wire!

L.

The mask was woven like a net,
And narrow was its mesh,
And close against her cheeks it set,—
And when she wept afresh
Tears watered it and kept it wet,—
Until, with many a bloody sweat,
It rusted on her flesh!

LI.

And through the flesh the canker wrought
Its way into the bone!
She deemed her pardon could be bought
At such a price alone!
'Poor child!' the pitying people thought,
'She honoureth as no daughter ought
A mother basely flown.'

LII.

For swiftly ran a rumour wild
Of how the widowed dame,
In burden of an unborn child,
Had fled to hide her shame;
Till many sneered,—and others smiled,—
And all whom she had blest, reviled
The honour of her name.

LIII.

Some said that, tempted by a witch,
She made a devil's pact
To drown her baby in a ditch,
And that her soul was racked
With many a hellish twinge and twitch
For shame that she, so high and rich,
Should sink to such an act.

LIV.

Then cried aloud the maiden mad,
'Ye know not what ye say!
How can a mother's heart be bad?
The Lord, to Whom ye pray,
Himself no purer Mother had
Than mine for whom my soul is sad
Because she hides away!—

LV.

'So cast for me a Silver Bell,—
(That clear its sound may be)—
And lift it high, and hang it well,
With hammer swinging free,—
Until my mother in her dell
Shall hear it over field and fell,
And hasten back to me!—

LVI.

'But lest my mother take affright
And hide in copse or croft,—
The hammer, when she hears it smite,
Must tingle sweet and soft,—
And I alone must mount the height
At middle eve and middle night,
To ring the bell aloft!—

LVII.

'Black though the summer-storm appear,
Or white the winter-drift,
Yet I will stand without a fear
On top of yonder Stift,
And every night of all the year
Will ring and ring till she shall hear
And hasten to her shrift.'

LVIII.

'Thine is a pretty whim!' quoth they,
'And we, at thy desire,
Will dig a mould-pit in the clay,
And build a furnace-fire,—
And thou, on next Saint Agnes' day,
Shalt come, and bring a scale, and weigh
The silver we require.'

LIX.

She weighed to them her silver belt,
Her silver bracelets twain,
The crucifix to which she knelt,
Her silver comb and chain,
Her bowls and flagons—all to melt;
And they who took her treasures, felt
A pity for her pain.

LX.

But why she gave, with lavish hand,
And penitential zest,
Each silver bodkin, brooch, and band
Of all that she possessed,
Except the dirk of Hildebrand,—
None ever seemed to understand!—
None ever asked or guessed!

LXI.

Yet afterward they often told
How through her web of wire
She saw the silver crushed and rolled
And molten in the fire,
And gazed until the bell grew cold,
And watched it taken from the mould
And hoisted to the spire.

LXII.

Then all her townsmen saw the sight
Whereof their annals tell,—
How, holding in her hand a light,
The doleful Damozel,
Purest of maidens, night by night,
Would clamber up the towering height,
And ring her Silver Bell.

LXIII.

But though it made as clear a clang
As ever thrilled the air,—
And though the listeners, as it rang,
Were moved to praise and prayer,—
Yet whilst they prayed, and whilst they sang,
The bell could never soothe a pang
Of her who rang it there.

LXIV.

Yet though unsolaced by its sound,
She rang it all the same ;
And ever as the night came round
Ulrica also came,—
Her face within her visor bound,—
Till by her penance, so renowned,
She earned a saintly name.

LXV.

Her flickering lamp, her fluttering sleeve,
Her flapping skirt of white,
Gleamed always there from middle-eve
Thenceforth till middle-night ;
When often—as if loth to leave—
She lingered still—to groan, and grieve,
And pray till morning-light.

LXVI.

In all the vigils that she kept,
Ulrica watched alone ;
And when she prayed, and when she wept,
No mortal heard the moan ;
And all night long she never slept,
And never spake a word except
To God upon His Throne !

LXVII.

The kindly burghers grieved at first
To see this lily-flower
Exposed where winds were at their worst,
And oft to sleet and shower,
And would have held her if they durst,—
But, breaking loose, away she burst
And nightly climbed the tower.

LXVIII.

At last they let her have her will,
Nor tried to stay her hand ;—
And seeing her so frail and ill,
With hardly strength to stand,
And shivering at the slightest chill,—
They thought she could not die until
Some boon had blest the land.

LXIX.

Then, stricken down, and sore distressed,
And on her dying bed,—
The haircloth still across her breast,
The wire about her head,—
Ulrica groaned and could not rest,
And cried that she must be confest,
And called a priest and said :

LXX.

'O man of God, I sinned a sin,
But now my soul is pure !
My heart is clean and white within,
And my forgiveness sure !
This cloth of fire hath burnt my skin—
This veil of wire hath worn me thin—
I cannot long endure !—

LXXI.

'The hour is nigh when I must die,
And die I gladly will,
For I in holy church shall lie,—
Yet out upon the hill
My Mother, through the wet and dry,
And under all the chilly sky
Will go unshriven still !—

LXXII.

'So ring the bell until she hears
And wakes and comes away !
Oh ring it till it pricks her ears
And calls her back to pray !
Oh ring it for a thousand years
Until the Lord Himself appears
And brings the Judgement Day !—

LXXIII.

' My Mother, when she hears it knoll,
Will come though I depart !
I did not slay my Mother's *soul*—
I only stabbed her *heart* !
Her blood would hardly fill a bowl !
My Mother's soul is sound and whole !
—Why do you stare and start ?—

LXXIV.

' What though I hid her in the wood ?—
Have I not toiled, and striven,
And done the best a daughter could
To call her to be shriven ?
O Mother, Mother, sweet and good,
Have I not suffered as I should,
And am I not forgiven ?'

LXXV.

With holy sacrament consoled,
She turned her to the wall,
And died,—and left a will enscrolled
Which gave her worldly all,—
Her land, her castle, and her gold,—
That twice the bell be nightly knolled
Until the tower should fall.

LXXVI.

The priest who heard Ulrica's tale,
And held Ulrica's hand,
Was once a warrior who, in mail,
Through all the Holy Land,
Had fought until his foes would quail
And at his very name turn pale ;—
It was Sir Hildebrand !

LXXVII.

Years afterward—destroyed by flame—
The Castle was rebuilt,
And then at last the murdered Dame
Showed how her blood was spilt,
For in her heart—O deed of shame !—
A dagger with Ulrica's name
Lay buried to the hilt !

LXXVIII.

Ulrica's bell can never bring
 Her mother to be shriven,
 Yet as it rang so let it ring,—
 That warning may be given
 How Jealous Love will turn and sting,
 And like a wild and furious thing
 Will rend as it is riven!¹

¹ During the Middle Ages, to put a man or woman to death *unshriven*—in other words, without allowing the victim the opportunity of confessing to a priest—was held to be the chief guilt incurred in committing a murder, and was such an unpardonable wrong to the dead that the murderer's mind was likely to be ever afterward haunted with remorse, or sooner or later driven into insanity. The precious value which was thus attached to being *shriven* was based on the belief that to die without 'benefit of clergy' was to jeopardize the soul's safety in the next world. Hence Ulrica's crazed anxiety to bring her mother to *shrift*.

Ulrica's Silver Bell—to any one who will take the trouble to climb the tower of the Stifkirche, and to crawl out upon the roof—will be found gracefully shaped and ornamented, and in perfect preservation; for though it is now more than 500 years old, and though it has always hung (and still hangs) in the open air, freely exposed to all weathers, yet every fresh rain cleanses it from mildew, and keeps it bright—in fact, much brighter than one would expect. But the metal is silver only in part, with a necessary addition of mellow and musical bronze.

In Stuttgart, every evening the year round, after the great clocks of the city have struck the hour of nine, and just as soon as their reverberations have had time to die away into silence, Ulrica's Silver Bell—all by itself—bursts forth with a sudden, swift, and cheerful sound. Again at midnight, following the other bells—as if always a little belated, yet never but a minute behind—it merrily repeats its peal.

The bell is not connected with the works of a clock, nor rung by machinery. The tongue is set swinging in the old-fashioned way by means of a bell-rope in a ringer's hand. The ringer stands, not in the church porch, but on the top of the tower, not far from the bell.

Though it has been rung twice every night ever since the fourteenth century, yet it gives no tocsin of alarm; nor does it summon to cathedral service, or wedding, or funeral; nor is it ponderous in size, or powerful in sound; and if it were rung at nine in the morning instead of the evening, and then again at noon instead of midnight, it would easily be mistaken for a brisk and cheery bell in the cock-loft of some village school.

The tale in the foregoing ballad—like all local legends—has an admitted, and at the same time a disputed, historical foundation.

The reader is therefore entitled to see the following passage from a well-known and semi-official compilation which is called *Württemberg as it Was and Is*.

The compilers say:—

'The Chatelaine of Weissenberg disappeared on the night before Palm Sunday, A.D. 1347, and no one could find the least trace of her. She had retired to her room as usual, and after her devotions, had gone to bed. In the morning, one of the doors of the Castle was found open; and so no one was at first surprised that she was absent, since it was her habit to go forth

THE APPLE OF CONCORD.

I.

*'A VIRGIN'S Vow, sworn in Diana's fane,
Although by chance, and with the lightest breath,
Is still a vow, and must a vow remain,
And binds the votaress till her day of death,
No matter who the virgin be, nor what she saith.'*

at dawn, either to pray in the quiet of the woods, or to visit the poor who needed help. She usually returned at noon; but as she had not done this, the people thought (it being a festival day of the church) that she had probably gone to Stuttgart to attend the Stiftkirche,—then called the Church of the Holy Cross. No anxiety was felt at her absence. Then, as the night grew darker and darker, and as she did not return, messengers were sent out in every direction to seek for her, but nowhere could any trace of her be found. The next day, more than a hundred people engaged in the search, but after a vain quest they returned to the Castle.

Then her daughter Ulrica wept bitterly. She would take no food nor drink, and she clothed herself in hair-cloths, and wore a mask of wire over her head and face. She took all her silver ornaments of great value, and sent them to a foundry, that he might make of them a bell of a sweet and clear tone; and when it was cast she had it hung on the topmost edge of the tower, and every night with her own hands rang it at nine and twelve o'clock, as a sign that her heart ached for her mother.

At her death the maiden left the following will, dated August 3, 1348:—
"I, the testatrix, Ulrica Margareta von Weissenberg, hereby will and devise that when my strength fails, and I am no longer able to ring the silver bell, two hundred marks of silver shall be taken from my estate so that from the interest of the capital some one shall be paid to ring this bell every night at nine and twelve o'clock."

In addition to the above extracts, others from other sources might be given, to show in what contradictory ways the story of Ulrica's crime and penance has been told. The narratives are numerous, but not one of them is consistent, natural, or plausible; and, strange to say, they all fail at one and the same point, namely, in assigning a sufficient motive for the murder. When a young girl kills her mother, there must be a powerful and abnormal reason for the act. There is hardly a greater possible revolt against nature than the crime of matricide. As to Ulrica's deed, it requires no less a motive than the most frenzied jealousy to account for it at all, or to make it credible in the least.

Accordingly, in the opinion of the present balladist, the various incoherent fragments of the grim romance have seemed to warrant the reconstruction of 'the city's legend' into a more harmonious and logical form. He has therefore taken the liberty of sifting and recasting the original materials, and of adding such new substance as poetic fancy has suggested and poetic justice has required.

II.

So ran—engraven on a plaque of gold
That hung across Diana's Delian shrine—
A text, which maidens, kneeling there of old,
Were bid to ponder as a warning sign
Against all heedlessness in making vows divine.

III.

One morn the maid Cydippé, with a face
(So thought her lover) like Diana's own,
Had started for the fane with laggard pace,
White-robed, and crowned with poppy-buds half-blown,
To vow that she would never loose her virgin zone.

Though to Diana's shrine, with jocund tread,
Full many a maid might hasten, thus arrayed—
More glad to be a vestal than to wed—
Yet pale Cydippé, heart-sick and afraid,
Sighed, as along the path she loitered and delayed.

The youth Acantios—poor except in pride—
Had won her heart, and to her hand laid claim;
But angrily her sire the suit denied;
And now all Delos to the Temple came
To see her sworn a priestess in Diana's name.

IV.

From door to altar the expectant throng
Stood parted where the maiden would pass through;
And while they waited (for she tarried long)
They craned their necks, as crowds in waiting do,
And gazed and gazed agen, ere yet she came in view.

So while she tarried, all who knew the tale
Of her great love, and of its great return,
Stood wondering if her purpose might not fail,
Or if her heart, rebellious, might not spurn
Obedience to the mandate of a sire so stern.

V.

The youth Acantios, on that very morn,
Had sought Cydippé, and on bended knee,
And wild with passion (for his heart was kne)
Implored her, with a lover's desperate plea,
For love's dear sake, to disobey her sire's decree.

VI.

The filial daughter, pious and demure,
Chaste as Diana's self, but not so chill,
Had loved her lover with a love so pure
That grief had made it all the purer still;
And now she said, 'I go to do my father's will.'

And so, despite the passion in her heart,
There was no disobedience in her mind;
'Farewell!' she cried, 'We must for ever part!'
Nor, after parting, looked she once behind,
As on and on she walked, foredoomed and not resigned.

She walked all unattended and alone,
In sign and token, on that solemn day,
That she who was to be Diana's own
Had turned for ever from the world away;
And down upon her head now beat the noontide ray.

VII.

Without a sandal on her tender feet
(For barefoot must she seek the sacred pile)
She soon began to languish in the heat,
And sat upon a shaded rock awhile,
And mourned that Love and Fate were hard to reconcile.

Down from her brow she took her sacred flowers,
Gazed at them long, wet them with many a tear,
And put them back—thinking of happier hours,
Gone but remembered, whose remembrance dear
Enhanced her present woe, and smote her numb with fear.

Little she thought of all the waiting crowd,
Or of her looked-for presence in the fane,
Or of her vow that must so soon be vowed,
Or of the Goddess in whose virgin train
She must from that unhappy day till death remain.

VIII.

Cydippé's thoughts were on the desperate youth
Whom she had parted from an hour before,
Whose image to the very last, forsooth
(Her soul's dear idol), she would still adore
Till at the altar she must think of him no more!

She spake his name, she uttered piteous cries,
She flung her arms into the empty air,
She looked in vain to the unanswering skies,
She poured her spirit forth in wild despair,—
Till her tumultuous grief was more than she could bear.

But grief must still be borne, though it be great;
And so at last, upleaping from the stone,
And fearing lest she should arrive too late,
Cydippé hurried onward, still alone,
With thorns to prick her feet, yet uttering not a moan.

IX.

When sad Cydippé reached the Temple-door,
The youth Acantios—sadder yet than she—
Stood at the threshold; and the look he wore
Was haggard, wan, and wild beyond degree!
'And is thy woe,' she asked, 'all for thy love of *me*?'

'All for my love of *thee*!' he fiercely said,
'And if thou lift thy finger for a sign,
Here will I enter—though I risk my head!—
And I will pluck thee from Diana's shrine,
And bear thee hence away, and make thee ever mine!'

No finger bade him! But the Damozel
Upraised her eyes, that downward had been cast,
And gave him, with a look, a last farewell,
Hiding no tear of all that fell so fast;
And then, with speechless grief, into the fane she passed.

X.

The patient priest, who met her at the shrine,
Laid both his hands in blessing on her brow,
Held to her lips the consecrated wine,
Asperged her, and commanded her to bow
And kiss the Earth, and speak aloud her vestal vow.

XI.

She bent her knees, but uttered not a word;
Her heart had stopped, as if in deathly rest;
No drop of blood in all her pulses stirred;
—When her bold lover to the altar pressed
And flung an apple right against Cydippé's breast.

It lodged a moment in her folds of snow,
 And on it, as she plucked it forth, she read
 (Bewildered now with fear as well as woe)
 Pricked on the rind, a writing; and it said,
'I love the youth Acantios, whom I swear to wed.'

XII.

Cydippé—who had read the words aloud,
 Not dreaming what they were—now stood aghast
 At what she thus unwittingly had vowed!
 And icy tremors through her body passed,
 With fiery flames, as hot as from a furnace-blast.
 The priest then pointed to the plaque of gold
 That hung before her on Diana's shrine,
 And with a trembling voice (for he was old)
 Declared that she had heeded not the sign;
 Which slowly then he thus recited, line for line:

XIII.

*'A Virgin's Vow, sworn in Diana's fane,
 Although by chance, and with the lightest breath,
 Is still a vow, and must a vow remain,
 And binds the votaress till her day of death,
 No matter who the virgin be, nor what she saith.'*

XIV.

Thus spake the priest, heard by the eager throng
 Who filled the fane within, from shrine to door,
 From door to portico, and thence along
 Beyond the porphyry pillars that upbore
 The pediment, out to the open court before.
 Forth sprang the youth Acantios, with a cry
 Shrill and exultant, piercing the hushed air,
 While right and left he thrust the people by,—
 Leaped to the altar, seized Cydippé there,
 And bore her thence,—leaving the crowd to gape and stare.
 Cydippé's vow was sworn beyond recall,
 And she fulfilled it with her heart and hand:
 And there was feasting in her father's hall;
 And swiftly ran the tale through all the land:
 Nor shall it be forgotten while the world shall stand!¹

¹ This story comes down from a great antiquity, and has been variously rendered by Ovid, Callimachus, and Antoninus Liberalis.

It should be added that Cydippé of Delos, the heroine of the above adventure, was not the same person as Cydippé of Argos, of whom a story is told at page 222.

THE SILVER PENNY.

I FOUND a Silver Penny;
‘And now,’ quoth I,
‘What shall I buy?
For I can buy with this
All things, or very many—
Even a smile or kiss.’

I spent my Silver Penny;
‘And now,’ quoth I,
‘O world, good-bye! —
For, having squandered this,
I get no smile from any,
Nor can I beg a kiss.’

AT THE OWOYO RIVER.

To ----- .

I WANDER by Owoyo stream
To watch its wintry flow,
And fancy how its banks will seem
When Summer roses blow.

Owoyo stream, so icy chill,
So very like to thee,
Goes wandering at its wayward will
Without a thought of me.

Owoyo stream, though freezing cold,
Shall thaw its ice in June:
But oh! the Fates have not foretold
If thou wilt melt as soon!

SUMMER AND WINTER.

A SONG.

I CROWNED her brow in Summer-time
 With roses white and red ;
 I sang my love to her in rhyme,
 And well my wooing sped !
 The Summer-time,
 O blessed time !
 Long after it had fled
 She smiled, and told me that my rhyme
 Kept running in her head.

I struck the stars with head sublime !
 I hoped (from what she said)
 To crown her brow in Winter-time
 With orange-buds instead !
 The Winter-time,
 O cursed time !
 The fool whom she has wed
 Is jealous, for he swears my rhyme
 Keeps running in her head.

TOM PEPPER'S DEFINITION.

YOU ask me, What is Love? And I reply
 That Love is Folly—by another name:—
 The giving of a heart,—not knowing why,—
 And getting no requital for the same.

THE ROMANCE OF THE ROTHENBERG.

STUTTGART, A. D. 1819-1864.

I.

ALOFT, on a mountain, where mountains are serried,
 The Swabians carried their king to be buried :
 His tomb on the Rothenberg high
 Is capped by the clouds of the sky.

II.

Not first for himself did he fashion and build it:
The wife of his youth was the tenant who filled it
Ere *he*, in his age, when he died,
Was carried, and laid at her side.

III.

He built it for love, yet it blazons his glory;
For all who behold it, or hear of the story,
Give honour, as honour is due,
To love and a lover so true.

IV.

His castles may crumble, his bridges grow rotten,
His laws and his statecraft may all be forgotten;
The thoughts of the world are on things
More vital than ashes of kings.

V.

The past is a dream, and is dim to the present;
Yet never shall Swabia's noble or peasant
Forget, while her forests are green,
The love of the king for the queen.

VI.

So list to the tale of the sepulchre's founder,
How William, who wedded Katrina, and crowned her,
Adored, in the queen on the throne,
The saintliest wife ever known.

VII.

She prayed, and gave alms, till the needy and lowly
Declared that a princess, so humble and holy,
Around her, wherever she passed,
The odour of sanctity cast.

VIII.

The king of an opposite metal was moulded!
He laughed, and he revelled; he swore, and he scolded;
He boasted of having no taint
That likened him unto a saint.

IX.

It never is strange in a roystering sinner
To love a good woman, and woo her, and win her;
And well knew the monarch the worth
Of such a good angel on earth.

X.

O death, in thy havoc, how seldom thou sparest
The noblest and brightest, the sweetest and rarest !
How often thy cruellest dart
Is aimed at the kindest heart !

XI.

The queen in her palace was mortally stricken !
The king, in his anguish at seeing her sicken,
Kept hoping (yet hoping in vain)
And writhed with a passionate pain.

XII.

To love and to lose is the keenest of losses ;
To love and to lose is the hardest of crosses ;
And death is a shadow that falls
On hovels and kingliest halls.

XIII.

As pale as the pillow whereon she was lying,
'My liege,' said the queen, on the day of her dying,
'In death I shall be, as in life,
For ever and ever your wife !

XIV.

'Wherever you lay me, continue to love me,
And if there shall ever be marble above me,
O promise me now, on your oath,
The tomb shall be *one* for us *both*.

XV.

'Make choice of a resting-place, quiet and lonely,
Where *we* two together,—we twain, and we only,—
Shall slumber as bridegroom and bride
Whom not even death can divide.

XVI.

'Though long be the years you may linger behind me,
Yet seek me at last, and be certain to find me !
And there I shall patiently wait,
For *I* am for ever your mate.'

XVII.

The king, at her bedside, with choking and sobbing,
With groans from his heart that was brokenly throbbing,
Then kist her good-bye,—as he gave
His promise concerning her grave.

XVIII.

Aloft, where the clouds on the Rothenberg rested,
He built her a tomb where the eagles had nested,—
A sepulchre high on a crest,
And still as a halcyon's nest!

XIX.

Encircling the summit whereon she reposes,
He planted a hedgerow of lilies and roses,
And reared, in a girdle of bloom,
A temple to cover her tomb.

XX.

High over the dome, to be ever beholden,
There glitters—(with more than a light that is golden!)—
A Cross that eternally shines
On twenty green valleys of vines!

XXI.

The stork from the village, if weary of flying,
Is glad of a perch where Katrina is lying,—
And, white as a ghost, he will stay,
As if he had lingered to pray.

XXII.

Within is a chapel, with chancel and altar;
And thither, at daybreak, with censer and psalter,
A priest who has gold on his gown
Goes up with the folk of the town.

XXIII.

And always the hymn that he sings for his matin
Is chanted in Greek (which is sweeter than Latin),
And far is the melody borne—
Like music of Memnon at morn.

XXIV.

Carved over the sepulchre's ponderous portal,
A butterfly shows that the soul is immortal,—
And texts are engraven to say
That love is for ever and aye.

XXV.

For years, if the dead have the gift of divining,
The luminous hope of Katrina kept shining,—
As haply a sunbeam had slipped
From heaven down into her crypt!

XXVI.

The king, though he mourned her, yet very soon after
Went back to his flagon, his dance, and his laughter,
And played at the perilous sport
Of smiling on dames of his court.

XXVII.

What wonder that ladies of folly and fashion
Were tempted to yield to the king and his passion,
And oft (as the chronicles show)
Said yes, or a meaningless no?

XXVIII.

The heart may be lured in a novel direction,
And yet will return to its early affection:
The heart of the monarch lay hid
Down under a sepulchre's lid.

XXIX.

The love of his youth was a fancy so lasting,
That death, in despite of the shade it was casting,
Quenched never a spangle or gleam
That gilded his earliest dream.

XXX.

The love that is first is the love that is longest;
The love that is first is the love that is strongest;
For longer than life is its length,
And stronger than death is its strength.

XXXI.

The king, with his ladies, was tempted to love them;
Yet ever there hovered an image above them,
Which beckoned him back as he strayed,
And which he adored and obeyed.

XXXII.

As honour grew weaker, and passion grew stronger,
The vision, although it restrained him no longer,
Pursued him wherever he went,
And chid him to turn and repent.

XXXIII.

At length, when the tongues of the critics were clamorous,
And dared to rebuke him as being too amorous,
It always would bring him to shame
To speak of the dead by her name.

XXXIV.

To think of Katrina—down under her grating—
And how she was lying there—waiting and waiting—
And how he was pledged to her yet—
Was more than the king could forget !

XXXV.

But conscience has often a way of compounding
For follies and foibles, however astounding ;
—And what was the king, to his rue,
Now led, in his folly, to do ?

XXXVI.

To quiet his mind, that was nettled and harried,
He ended the gossip, and suddenly married !
—Yet after the wedding, he still
Went weeping to Rothenberg hill !

XXXVII.

And back, where the feet of the dancers were flying,
He came with a heart that for ever was sighing !
He danced with the bride he had wed—
He sighed for his wife who was dead !

XXXVIII.

When flagons were flowing, and guests were carousing,
The king, with his head on his breast, would be drowsing,
And then he would wake with a groan !
—He dreamed of Katrina alone !

XXXIX.

He rollicked and frolicked from midnight till morrow,
Yet ever he cherished his love and his sorrow ;
—And what though his revels were great,
His duty was done to the State.

XL.

A king, yet a lover of liberty ever,
He wrought for his country with busy endeavour ;—
And proudly the chronicles say—
He never was idle a day !

XLI.

From morning till night he was building a highway,
Or planting a garden, or tracing a by-way,
Or blasting a rock or a ridge,
Or flinging the arch of a bridge.

XLII.

No minion or drudge of the palace or castle,
No dresser of vineyards, no henchman or vassal,
No delver, or son of the soil,
Outrivalled the monarch in toil.

XLIII.

He hid in the scabbard the sword and the sabre;
He took for his sceptre the hammer of labour;
And, dropping his helmet and plume,
He ruled by the plough and the loom.

XLIV.

He traversed his kingdom from centre to border;
He lifted its burdens, he settled its order;
Not boasting of blood that he spilt,
But proud of the cities he built.

XLV.

He won his reward in the love of the nation,
Till pillar and statue and festal ovation
Bore witness, in city and town,
How well he had honoured the crown.

XLVI.

At last, as a patriarch, feeble and hoary,
He bade a farewell to his splendour and glory,
And gave—with a joy in his tones—
Commandment concerning his bones.

XLVII.

He spake his decree with a tranquil decision,
And looked, as he spake, as if seeing a vision;—
For great was the peace in his heart;
And strong was his wish to depart.

XLVIII.

He talked of Katrina, and how he had told her
That both of their bodies together should moulder;
And bade that his corpse, in the night,
Be carried to Rothenberg height;

XLIX.

That there, without trapping or pompous adorning,
His pall should be spread till the peep of the morning;
And then that a cannon should boom,
Saluting the twain in their tomb.

L.

Now people who visit the place of his slumber
 Forget that his faults were a legion in number ;—
 And spare him their cavillings keen
 Because of his love to the queen.

LI.

Through fifty long years he had lingered behind her,
 Ere up through the darkness he journeyed to find her!
 —Can love be a thing of the past?
 —Then why did he seek her at last?

LII.

Serene on the Rothenberg summit together
 They slumber in peace through the stormiest weather,
 Awaiting, just under the skies,
 The day when the dead shall arise!¹

¹ The hero of this tale was King William the First, of Würtemberg, whose busy labours, whose jovial manners, and whose burly figure are still remembered in Swabia, and especially in Stuttgart. He was born in 1781, came to the throne in 1816, reigned half a century, and died in 1864, in the eighty-third year of his age. In his early manhood, while crown-prince, he served zealously in the wars against Napoleon: yet ever afterward, as king, his ambition was wholly civic instead of military. He had a gift for practical business, and he was a ceaseless director of public works. His ruling passion was not to *rule*, but to *build*. If he did not find his capital in brick and leave it in marble, he found it a small town and left it a large city.

Katrina, the wife of his youth, was a Russian princess. After a brief wedlock of only three years, she died in 1819, leaving behind her a rare reputation for charity to the poor and sick. Shortly after her coronation the peasants of Swabia were afflicted with the terrible famine of 1817, when the young and tender-hearted queen spent a great part of her private fortune in feeding the destitute. She was ever afterward reverently called 'the mother of the land.'

The mausoleum which her husband built to her memory on the Rothenberg is a circular Greek temple, partially squared by four out-jutting porticos, each portico having stately pillars and massive steps. The interior is furnished as a chapel, and contains marble statues of the Evangelists by Thorwaldsen and Danneker. The crypt, where lie the bodies of the king and queen, side by side, is dimly seen through a heavy brass grating in the centre of the chapel floor. Three times a year, or oftener, the Greek service is performed at the altar. The temple is surrounded by a gigantic circle of rose-trees, and when the roses are in bloom the whole hill-top is as fragrant as a garden.

The Rothenberg, even without reference to the tomb that crowns it, is an interesting point in the suburbs of Stuttgart; and the view from its summit, where the mausoleum stands, is noble and impressive.

The king, in his last will and testament, said:—

'I wish to rest in the sepulchre built for my wife Katrina, and by her side, as I promised her.'

THE MILLIONAIRE OF MECCA.

IN THE YEAR OF THE PROPHET, 403.

I.

THE pious Arab robber, Ali Bába,
 Whenever he had robbed a caravan,
 Went always afterward to the Ka-ába¹
 And knelt and prayed
 And asked a blessing on his thievish trade.

II.

And thus this prayerful man
 (Who prospered as the righteous seldom can)
 Had houses, horses, harems—all the things
 Which wealth (that very dubious blessing) brings.

III.

So when in his magnificence he died,
 The people pointed to his name with pride,
 And raised above his bones
 A noble pile of stones,
 And on it carved a writing, and it ran :
 'Here rests in peace—without a mortal care—
 God's favourite, Ali Bába, man of prayer.'

On the outer wall of the structure is this inscription :—

Die Liebe höret nimmer auf.
 (Love never faileth.)

The king's funeral is described as follows in a contemporary narrative :—
 'He gave orders that his body should be taken from his castle in Stuttgart by night, accompanied only by the court preacher, by the marshal, and by an adjutant and guard, and that the procession should be so arranged as to reach the Rothenberg at the first dawn of day. A short prayer was to be said as the body was lowered into the crypt, and a single cannon-shot was then to make known to the city (five miles off) the moment of the interment. As the procession passed on through each successive village, each house, even the poorest, had lights in the windows, and showed black draperies of mourning. The bells of all the neighbouring thorps were heard tolling, and citizens from near and far—men, women, and children—some of them weeping—came forth from their homes and joined the march.'

¹ The Ka-ába (or 'square-house') is a small building that stands within the Great Mosque at Mecca, and is used as an inner temple—or holy of holies—where the Faithful followers of Islam may not only pray, but kiss a famous Black Stone, or aerolite, which has been an object of veneration with Arabs from time immemorial.

IV.

One day an Angel—dropping from a cloud—
 Perched on the pillar! The astonished crowd,
 Who gazed agape,
 Stood awe-struck at the shining shape
 And hushed their hum,
 And marvelled why the heavenly guest had come,
 And what immortal truth he had to tell.

V.

To whom the Voice Angelic cried aloud:
 'God's favourite, Ali Bába, is in *Hell*!—
 And ye who plunder Pilgrims every day,
 And then in yonder Temple kneel and pray,
 Shall win God's favour in the selfsame way!'

VI.

Thus spake the Angel—but so long ago
 That now in Mecca (as the Pilgrims know,
 Who yearly throng that consecrated place)
 The Angel's warning needs to be repeated,—
 For now, O Allah, God of heavenly grace!
How strangers in that holy town are cheated!

 ANACREON'S DISCOVERY.

B. C. 541.

The Bard of Teos speaks.

I ONCE in the Vale of Tempé
 Went roaming the whole day long
 In quest of a glimpse of beauty
 To serve as a theme of song.
 I looked at the mists of morning
 That seemed, as they fringed the sun,
 Like fleeces that far out-goldened
 The trophy that Jason won.
 I saw in the burning zenith
 The face of the bashful moon,—
 Diana and great Apollo
 Saluting each other at noon.
 I watched as the train of Hesper
 In timorous twos and threes
 Were quivering up in the heavens,
 And quivering down in the seas.

But ever at each new splendour
That followed from morn till night
I felt in my soul a sadness
From gazing at what was bright.

And ever the brightest sunshine
Would sadden my soul the most,—
As if in the smile of Nature
I also beheld her ghost.

I marvelled how sky and ocean,
How mountain and shining plain,
Could shadow and pall my spirit
And give me a subtle pain.

I said, 'There is something lacking
In sights of the land and sea :
Such beauty may comfort others,
It never can comfort *me* !'

Then, weary of foot with tramping,
And weary of heart and head,
I fretted and yawned and murmured ;
And vowing a vow, I said :

'I never will kill a tortoise
To make for myself a lyre
Till first I have seen a vision
That kindles my blood with fire !'

Whereat, from a lamp-lit window
I chanced as I sauntered by,
To catch, through the vines of ilex,
The flash of a woman's eye.

I saw it for just a moment,—
But moments are ages long ;
And now, and from now for ever,
That vision shall be my song.¹

¹ Anacreon, the ancient Greek poet, was born B.C. 562, and is styled (from his birthplace) the Swan of Teos. He once received from King Polycrates a gift of five talents, and was so excited at having such a sum of money that for three nights he could not sleep. He then returned the money in full, with the message that it cost him too much trouble to keep it. Having written many songs in praise of wine, he died from swallowing the seed of a grape.

A CURIOSITY IN CONCHOLOGY.

'Things durable perish, while things fragile survive. Among the suggestive treasures in the Sloane collection is an ancient and well-preserved egg from Africa, of a now extinct species of bird. The faded inscriptions on the shell are polylingual. The pyramids are crumbling, while this egg, dating from the Ptolemies, remains without a crack.'—*The Fortnightly Review*.

I AM of Cleopatra's time and land!
 Be careful how you hold me in your hand,
 For I am frail—though, as you plainly see,
 I have not proved to be as frail as she!
 She was a beauty! Oh, I knew her well!
 She wrote her autograph upon my shell!
 The letters still remain—they are in Greek:
 You see them here—(or so does Captain Speke).
 I am a wonder never known before!—
A twice-laid egg!—(don't drop me to the floor!)
 A Dodo laid me first—then Speke himself
 (The noble fellow!) laid me on this shelf.

PETER THE GREAT'S MAXIM.

WHAT though the Czar be lord of half the Earth,
 Yet not his land, his ships, his iron glove,
 His golden crown, his sacred blood of birth,
 Would altogether be a straw in worth
 Without his people's loyalty and love.

EPIGRAM

ON THE FIGHTING EDITOR OF THE MORNING
 BROWBEATER.

THIS quarrelsome old curmudgeon,
 Whose pen was a daily bludgeon,
 Would laugh at the rogues he bruised,—
 Yet *he* (as we learn)
 When whacked in return,
 Was never at all amused,
 But took it in *very* high dudgeon,—
 This quarrelsome old curmudgeon.

DON CUPID'S TRICK.

THE little boy called Love lay dead,
And on his tiny tomb
Some carven letters sweetly said
That for a day his heart had bled,
And named the maid for whom.

This maid, on coming to his mound,
Felt a remorseful pain,
And kissed his image, clasped it round,
Grew pale, and sank upon the ground,
And shed an April rain.

Then, like a prison-bursting thief,
Outleapt the bounding boy,
Whose stay in Hadés had been brief—
For hardly had he died of grief
Than he arose for joy.

'What means this caper?' cried the maid,
As in his arms she sank,
And half-delighted, half-afraid,
Began most sweetly to upbraid
This most audacious prank.

'Fair maid, your scorn of me,' he said,
'Was all a make-believe,
And put the thought into my head
To play the trick of being dead,
To see how you would grieve.'

She dashed with anger from her eyes
Her all-too-tender tears,—
And greatly to the lad's surprise,
And heedless of his woful cries,
She boxed his little ears.

'Back to your tomb, and there abide !
And quit it not !' quoth she
(And added, locking him inside),
'I never loved you till you *died*
For just your love of *me*.'

—♦—

A TIFF IN ARCADIA.

YOUNG Florian was a love-sick swain,
Who in his joy and pain
(For love has both) thus spake and sighed
Ere yet he won his bride :

'Ye Gods, if when she comes to-day
Her answer still be nay,
I then will take my flock and crook
And seek another brook.

'I will go East, I will go West,
And never will I rest
Until I find the healing stream
That sparkles in my dream.

'For all our shepherds tell a tale
Of how in Tempé's vale
There is a magic fount that flows
To heal a lover's woes.

'And once, to quench a shepherd's thirst,
The fountain upward burst
And flowed with crystal water chill
Until he drank his fill.

'Then straightway, like a phantom weird,
The fountain disappeared,
And the bewildered fool forgot
To mark the magic spot.

'That silly shepherd never knew
Whether the rain or dew
Or melting of Mount Ida's snow
Made the charmed water flow -

'He only knew that from the bank
Whereon he knelt and drank
He rose refreshed, and nevermore
Had heartache as before.

'For she who with her haughty frown
Had crushed his spirit down,
Was from his memory swept away
All in a single day !

'Oh would that I myself had quaffed
That same oblivious draught,
And now were cured of all the pain
Of having loved in vain !

'To-day she will agen be here,
 And she will mock and jeer
 Till I shall wish, amid her scorn,
 I never had been born !
 'Ye Gods, inspire me to forget
 All passion, all regret,—
 All image of her, I implore,
 Now and for evermore !
 'Yet nay, ye Gods, deny my prayer !
 She is so pure and fair
 That be her answer what it will
 I must adore her still !'
 —The maid, who stood behind an oak,
 Heard every word he spoke ;
 And forth she stepped, and blushed, and sighed,—
 And Florian won his bride.

COUNT GHORKO'S COURTSHIP.

A. D. 1742.

I LOVED Honora, and she was kind
 (Or kind for a livelong day) ;
 She then, in a temper, changed her mind—
 For so a lady may.
 She changed her mind (as a lady will)—
 She said to me, 'Go thy way !'
 And forth in a fury, pale and ill,
 I went—yet longed to stay.
 She watched me then from her window-pane,
 And beckoned and seemed to say,
 'A wooer may woo and not in vain—
 Despite the lady's nay.'
 I turned and climbed to her parapet,
 And pushing the vines away,
 I captured her then—and hold her yet—
 For ever and a day !

THE TRAGIC FATE OF SOCRATES.

HIS wife was old
 And was a scold.

THE PHANTOM OX.

Among the peasants of Pomerania it is a superstition that a Spectre, in the form of a White Ox, glides through their villages and farms, and that any person on whom he breathes will at once sicken and die.

I.

‘WHAT frightens you in from your play, my *child*?
Your cheeks are as white as snow!
Your lips are of ashes! your eyes are wild!
O why do you tremble so?’

II.

‘Dear mother, just now,—as I crossed the brook
For lilies along the brink,—
An Ox, with a deathly and ghostly look,
Came down to the stream to drink!

III.

‘Instead of a creature of flesh and bones,
He seemed to be crystal-glass!
I saw through his body the trees and stones
And mosses and meadow-grass!

IV.

‘And round me, and round me, he went and *went*,
Yet walked with so light a tread
That under his hoof not a harebell bent,
Nor violet bowed its head!

V.

‘Nor cast he a shadow upon the ground,
Nor image upon the stream!
His lowing was fainter than any sound,
And stiller than any dream!

VI.

‘I quivered and shivered from limb to limb!
Too frightened to turn and flee!
The further and further I shrank from *him*,
The nearer he came to *me*!

VII.

‘My handful of lilies he sniffed and smelt!
His breath!—it was chilly and fresh!
His horns!—they were soft in their touch, but *felt*
Like icicles to my flesh!

VIII.

'I chattered with cold! and I burned with flame!
I called upon God and man!
I waited for help, but as no one came,
I took to my heels and ran!

IX.

'I rushed through the water across the brook,
And high on the shelving shore
I stopt, and I ventured to turn and look,—
Not thinking to see him more!

X.

'But straight in my wake he had crossed the flood,
And followed me up the bank!
The sight of him curdled and froze my blood!
My spirit within me sank!

XI.

'I hid in the rushes, O mother dear,
But swift as a whiff of air
He followed me there!—he followed me here!—
He follows me everywhere!

XII.

'O mother, now drive him away, away!
He stands at the very door!
—And down fell the lad with a shriek, and lay
And moaned on the cottage-floor.

XIII.

The mother,—bewildered, and dazed, and dumb,—
Could see but the empty air,
Yet knew,—if the Shadowy Ox had come,—
That Death would be quickly there!

XIV.

Then pressing her darling against her breast,
She pillowed him on his bed:
The moon,—like a watcher,—was in the west:
The beautiful child was dead!

THE DUKE OF CAMPO SANTO.

I.

THE gate of the city stood open wide ;
And, close to the wall, on the country-side,
The Beggars were huddled upon the grass,
Expecting the Duke and his train to pass.

II.

The town was a town where he oft came in—
Yet never with herald or trumpet's din.

III.

His coming might either be soon or late :
So always the beggars kept near the gate—
For so, on the mighty, the humble wait.

IV.

The wretches were squalid, and clad in rags ;
The women—ere yet they were old—were hags ;
The children were wasted to skin and bone ;
The dogs had a hungry and human tone !

V.

For poverty falls with a fearful blight !—
And pitiful, pitiful was the sight !
The fathers and mothers were sore distressed ;
Yet oh for the babes who were at the breast—
The pity was more than for all the rest !

VI.

—The Duke in his chariot rumbles by !
The Beggars salute him with hue and cry !
They beg him to halt ! Will his Highness heed ?
—O yes, for he comes to supply their need.

VII.

His chariot stops, and the Duke descends !
He tells them, 'I visit the town, my friends,—
And so, if you hope for an alms to-day,
Speak hurriedly each, for I haste away.'

VIII.

Cried one, 'I am hungry—I ask for bread !'
—To whom, in a whisper, his Highness said,
'Why famish ? Go knock at my palace-door—
If hunger be all, you shall starve no more !'

IX.

Another cried out, 'I am lame, you see—
In charity, prithee remember *me*!'

—'O cripple, I give you my healing touch!—
You never hereafter shall need your crutch!'

X.

'And *I*,' quoth another, 'am blind, am blind—
So out of your bounty be kind, be kind!'

—'O wretch! I will cure you this very day!—
I need but to cover your eyes with clay
And then you will never, by day or night,
Complain to me more of your loss of sight.'

XI.

Still pressing around him, the begging crowd
Grew brazen, and shouted their wants aloud:

XII.

'My lord,' said a clamourer, 'I am old—
No dwelling have I—and the nights are cold!'

—'O thou who art homeless!—on yonder hill
Some houses are mine, that are empty still,
And waiting for lodgers to come from town:
Go choose thee a dwelling, and lay thee down:
The house, if you take it, is yours to keep—
And nothing will ever disturb your sleep!'

XIII.

'My lord,' said an urchin, with thin, white palms,
'An orphan would beg for a little alms!'

—'My laddie, or ever your bones be old,
I promise you *all* you can clutch and hold!'

XIV.

A labourer cried, 'I am willing to toil:
So set me at work—I will dig your soil!'

—'O delver, I honour thy horny hand!
The *Spade*!—it is busy in all my land!
A plot of my ground shall be thine, in fee—
But others shall handle the spade for thee!'

XV.

A woman, too feeble to toil or spin,
Said, 'Help me to go to my kith and kin!'

—'O dame, I remember thy kindred well—
I shortly will send thee to where they dwell.'

XVI.

'My lord,' said a sufferer, sick and faint,
'I have an incurable, strange complaint!
My fever is fiercer than I can bear:
I need a physician—and nurse—and care.'

—His Highness the Duke, on the throbbing head
Then chillingly rested his hand, and said,
'Physician am I to the poorest poor!—
And fever is what I am come to cure!'

XVII.

They pleaded—he hearkened to every plea,
And never had beggars a friend so free!

XVIII.

He granted the noisy their loudest prayer,
And gave to the silent an equal share,
Who cried for it not, but whose woeful tale
Was told in their faces, so deathly pale.

XIX.

The last (and the neediest) wretch who spoke
Was one who was naked, and begged a cloak!

—His Highness replied, with a merry tone,
'I cannot refuse thee—so take my own!'
And, doffing his mantle of sable-black,
He folded it over the beggar's back!
The Duke was a jester, and oft inclined
To practise his drollery on mankind:
And so—in uncloaking himself—his whim
Was just to uncover—from rib to limb—
His frame as a skeleton, gaunt and grim!
The beggars—beholding him—gasped for breath,
And knew that their bountiful friend was Death!

THE DOUBLE STRATAGEM.

Graf Gaffir of Antwerp was fond of boasting how he courted his Italian wife.

I.

PAULINE shall fill your glasses,
And as you sip your wine,
I will relate a merry tale
Of how I made her mine.

II.

I knew that she was haughty,
Like all her Tuscan race,—
And every wooer grew abashed
Who looked her in the face.

III.

So, pleading not my passion,
Lest she should flout the flame,—
I sent my love a lover's gift,
But signed a stranger's name.

IV.

It was a blood-red ruby,—
So full of love's own fire
That well I knew the woman's wit
Would guess the man's desire.

V.

If she received my token,
Her breast would burn to know
Who was the giver of the gift?—
What lover loved her so?

VI.

We met. Quoth she, 'A stranger—
Whose name is—(let me see—
I think he writes it Valentine)—
Hath sent a gift to me.'

VII.

Quoth I, 'He is my comrade—
A sad and love-sick bard!
He loves thee well, O lady fair!—
Alas, his fate is hard!'

X

VIII.

'Thy *comrade*? Send him hither!—
But come not as his guide!—
For I a message have for him,—
For him, and none beside!'

IX.

'Nay, *write* thy message, lady!—
Sit here and write it down!—
And I will bear it as thy page,
And seek him through the town.'

X.

'What? write my bosom's secret,
And trust the scroll to thee?
Go, trifler, get thee hence with speed,
And send thy *friend* to me!'

XI.

I left her!—and I curst her!—
Herself and all her tribe!—
Yet I returned to her, disguised
As Valentine, a scribe!

XII.

Quoth she, 'Take back thy jewel!—
My heart is not my own!—
My heart is his who sends thee here!—
O why is *his* a stone?'

XIII.

I dropt my cloak and visor—
I claspt her to my breast—
I kist her madly, mouth to mouth—
I need not tell the rest.

XIV.

See how Pauline is blushing!—
She blushes like the wine!
—What if her *no* had been to *me*,
Her *yes*, to Valentine?

THE CHAMOIS-HUNTER.

I.

AT eve, from the Altorf valley
Young Otto must pick his way
And climb to the Alpine summit
And wait for the break of day.

II.

(For he who would hunt the chamois
Must start from the vale at night,
And creep to the cliffs ere morning,
To hunt at the peep of light.)

III.

So kissing his love at sunset,
He left her upon the moors
(For lovers must have their partings
Albeit their love endures).

IV.

He kist her with burning kisses,
And folded her to his heart :
The sun in the west blushed crimson
At seeing them kiss and part.

V.

Young Otto looked down the valley
Ere darkness had veiled the land,—
While Agatha, in the twilight,
Stood waving to him her hand.

VI.

He lifted his cap, and swung it,
And shouted a loud halloo,
Till echoes themselves woke echoes
And trebled his long adieu.

VII.

So deathly a silence followed,
It seemed to him on the hill
No leaf was astir,—and even
His heart (as he thought) stood still.

VIII.

Alone in the Alpine forest,
Alone where the foxes fed,
Alone with the screeching night-owls,
He talked to himself and said :

IX.

'The chamois are hard to follow,
And little the gold they bring,
But gold they must bring to-morrow
To buy for my bride a ring.

X.

'Now hark! In the village-steeple
How faint is the clock below!
It striketh the hour of midnight—
How far I have yet to go!

XI.

'Beneath me the thorp is sleeping:
My darling,—how sleepeth *she*?
She sleepeth with spirit waking!
She dreameth a dream of *me*!

XII.

'Of *me*, and the fleet-foot chamois!—
The chase, and the dizzy leap!
She shrieketh my name in terror,
And starts in her tender sleep!

XIII.

'I would that as now she sleepeth,
My head on her bosom lay!
The nearer I climb to heaven
The further I am away!

XIV.

'The air on the cliff grows colder,
And whitens the rocks with frost!
A slip of my feet in climbing—
And life and its love are lost!

XV.

'Next Candlemas, at the altar,
Maid Agatha shall be mine,—
And there shall be songs and dancing,
And there shall be cakes and wine!

XVI.

'At last I am at the summit
Or ever the east is grey!—
With time for a snatch of slumber
From now till the break of day.

XVII.

'So here I will spread my blanket,
And here I will strike my fire:
How weary is he who wanders
Away from his heart's desire!

XVIII.

'Ye shades of the Alpine forest,
That creep through the boughs of fir,—
Creep now through my drowsy eyelids,
And bring me a dream of *her*!

XIX.

He slept, and he dreamed till morning,—
For soft was the mountain-sward,—
And love is the balm of labour,
And woman's is man's reward.

XX.

He slept on the topmost summit,
Nor woke when the sun arose,—
And there he shall sleep for ever,
Beneath the eternal snows!

XXI.

They feathered him as he slumbered,
Nor wakened him by their fall;—
And cold is the sheet that shrouds him,
And white is his burial-pall!

XXII.

Then down in the Altorf village
The people in wonder said,
'Maid Agatha sews a garment
As if she were yet to wed!'

XXIII.

Maid Agatha sewed a garment
To wear at the altar-rail:
The robe was a bride's apparel!—
The veil was a wedding-veil!

XXIV.

Maid Agatha had her wedding,—
But not to the sound of mirth!
She wedded the Lord in Heaven,—
His sorrowful bride on earth!

XXV.

As daily before the altar
 She takes with the nuns her place,
 The villagers see (or fancy)
 A glory upon her face !

XXVI.

They say that her prayers to Heaven
 Rise part of the way and stop,—
 To gather a strength from sorrow
 Each day on the mountain-top !

*CUI BONO ?*

‘Who will show us any good?’

I.

SEE all the racers straining !
 What is the goal of strife ?
 The prize is worth the gaining—
 It is the Crown of Life !

II.

The trophy is a treasure
 That bears a varying name :
 The giddy call it Pleasure ;
 The noble call it Fame ;

III.

The lover calls it Passion ;
 The miser calls it Pelf :
 Each, after his own fashion,
 Names it to suit himself !

IV.

Each, as his fancy styles it,
 Grasps at it with a clutch,—
 And seizing it, defiles it
 With soilure in his touch !

V.

Or if no man may hurt it
 With handling of his hand,
 He yet may oft pervert it
 From uses great or grand.

VI.

So what he deemed a blessing,
And panted to obtain,
Becomes, in the possessing,
Corroded to a bane !

VII.

The scholar finds it Folly ;
The miser, Carking Care ;
The lover, Melancholy ;
The profligate, Despair !

VIII.

So man's supreme ambition,—
His darling, chief desire,—
Is sure, on its fruition,
To cloy and pall and tire !

IX.

Instead of what he thought it,
He finds it but a cheat,—
And wonders why he sought it
With such a toil and heat !

X.

The winner winneth little,
The loser loseth less ;
Each gets his jot and tittle
Of simple nothingness !—

XI.

Or worse !—for he may follow
Some bubble wondrous fine,
Not only void and hollow,
But mocking and malign.

XII.

And then some dire disaster
Befalls him soon or late,—
For *no* man is the master
Of what he calls his fate.

XIII.

He neither can foresee it,
Nor alter it a whit !
The Heavens alone decree it !—
He simply follows it !

XIV.

His course is not his choosing :
And if he miss the goal,
His anguish at the losing
Is wholesome for his soul.

XV.

So though the racer never
May win the wreath he would,
Yet still his best endeavour
Is of itself a good.

XVI.

The thrill is in the striving,
Not in the trophy won ;—
For, after the arriving,
The rapture all is done !

XVII.

The struggle, and the straining !
The sweat-drops, and the sighs !—
These !—and the hope of gaining !—
Are better than the prize !

XVIII.

So, not indeed to win it,
But just to wage the strife,—
This is the glory in it !—
This is the Crown of Life !

*THE TRYSTING-PLACE.*

I.

WHILE they lingered, he and she,
Underneath their linden-tree,—
Twilight fell on land and sea.

II.

Trembling, as the colour fled
Swiftly from her lips of red,—
'Kiss me not agen !' she said.

III.

He, unheedful of her prayer,
Kist her madly, then and there,—
Lips, and cheeks, and brow, and hair !

IV.

Half in shame, and half in pride,
'Let me go!' the maiden cried,—
Leaping from her lover's side.

V.

With a swifter leap sprang he—
Caught her—clasped her—bent his knee—
Vowed his vow—and pled his plea!

VI.

Did she frown and answer nay?
Did she smile and answer yea?
Not a word had she to say!

VII.

But a maid who sinks to rest
Mutely on her lover's breast
Leaves her answer to be guessed!

VIII.

When those lovers, hand in hand,
Stept from where those lindens stand,—
Morn had dawned on sea and land.

*KING JOHN'S RIDE TO RUNNYMEDE.*

It is a tradition in Oxford that on the evening of June 14, A. D. 1215, while King John was amusing the lower orders of the people with a grand fête of gross character, he received from his revolted Barons—then in arms against him throughout all England—their final and peremptory summons commanding him to meet them on the following morning at Runnymede for the signing of Magna Charta. The King's fulfilment of this summons required him to take a night's ride of four or five hours on a good horse. There is a rival tradition that he rode to Runnymede, not from Oxford, but from Windsor—a much shorter gallop. The two traditions constitute a duplicate historical foundation for the accompanying ballad.

I.

THE times were ill in England,
And boded worse and worse—
For woe befalls a kingdom
Whose King becomes its curse.

King John—the vilest monarch
That ever wore a crown—
Had spread at Beaumont Palace
A feast for Oxford town.

(For by his wine and wassail,
His music and his sport,
He hoped to win the People,
Since he had lost the Court.)

So all the town was bidden,
And all the town must go;
For whoso dared be absent
Would be the tyrant's foe.

The brave might scorn his bidding,
And bide his royal hate,
But all his fawning caitiffs
Would throng his palace gate.

II.

It was that proud old palace
Whereof is left no stone,
Yet which, in all its glory,
Was once King Richard's own.¹

Locked in a silver casket,
And set with jewels fine,
The Heart that was the Lion's
Was now a Holy Shrine.

And at the Shrine the Nation
Had prayed to Heaven, and said,
'O crown the Lamb of England
King in the Lion's stead!'²

But ere the prayer had ended
The gentle Lamb was slain,
And to the Lion's palace
The Wolf stole in to reign.

III.

The Wolf must have his orgies—
And so, in Beaumont Hall,
To-night he holds a revel,
And loud will be the brawl.

¹ It was in Beaumont Palace at Oxford that Coeur de Lion was born. The building has disappeared—its materials having been re-used in the erection of other structures.

² King Richard I of England, while reconnoitring the castle of Chalus in Limousin, approached so near its walls that a bowman on the parapet hit him with an arrow. The arrow was envenomed, and the wound was mortal. The chroniclers delight to tell of the King's magnanimity to the skilful archer, who on being brought as a prisoner to the royal bedside, received the dying monarch's pardon, and was dismissed in peace.

Crowned with a wreath of ivy
And clad in white¹, King John
Salutes a thousand feasters
And bids the feast go on.

It is the King's own palace,
And where his court should be—
Yet whom does England's monarch
Look vainly round to see?

IV.

He sees no earl nor baron,
No knight from any shire,
No burgess from the townhouse,
No hoary-headed sire,—

No black-robed judge nor abbot,
No hero battle-scarred,
Nor from a college-cloister
A scholar or a bard.

The town had wits and worthies
(For never town had more),
But though the King had bid them,
They darkened not his door.

Yet when a house grows rotten
The vermin will intrude,—
And now the proud old palace
Reeked with the low and lewd.

At all the ten great tables
They crowded every bench,
And every tipsy gallant
Drank with a wanton wench.

The merry mob grew noisy,
And as the noise increased
The King grew mute as marble,
While others kept the feast.

He sat as in a stupor
Or in a dumb despair,
Each hand upon a griffin
That knobbed his oaken chair.

¹ Like all the Plantagenets, King John was strikingly handsome and imposing; and though he had now hardly reached his forty-eighth year, yet like an octogenarian he already had snow-white hair; and his festal garments were of white, to match with it. His tunic (we are told) was white damask. His gloves (which were also white) had rubies on one hand and sapphires on the other. His white baldric was studded with diamonds.

v.

For now the Wolf of England
Was sickened with the fear
That once again his hunters
Were on his track and near.

He knew that all his Barons
Had on their oaths agreed
To muster on the morrow—
In arms—at Runnymede.

In arms? A peaceful Council
To meet in battle-line?
Yea, England asks a Charter,
Which England's King must sign.

Thrice hath he scorned to sign it,—
And now, from all his realm,
His Barons go to brave him,
And go with sword and helm.

If further he defy them,
Their weapons they will draw,—
For Kings, though high in England,
Are not above the law!

vi.

-- The eve is mild and misty
Warm with the breath of June,
And in the sky a circle
Begins to rim the moon.

On such a night graves open
And spectres stalk abroad,
And at the evil portent
The coward King is awed.

—What sees the startled monarch?
What is it makes him rise,
And thrust his hands before him
To hide it from his eyes?

He sees a Wandering Spirit
Whose body has not found
A grave in any churchyard
Or consecrated mound!

It is as fair a Phantom
As ever trod the air,
A youth of blooming visage
And long and golden hair.

And in his breast his death-wound
Begins agen to bleed;
And now he points his finger
At him who did the deed!

VII.

And so the kingly culprit,
Dumb, yet with chattering teeth,
Stands shivering, till his sword-blade
Rattles within its sheath!

He cringes to the Shadow,
And asks with bated breath,
'Did not my two-edged dagger
Deal out to thee thy death?

'Then tell me—since thy carcass
Was sunken in the Seine—
How is thy ghost in England,
O Arthur of Bretagne?'¹

VIII.

Then spake the Wraith, and answered
(For so a spirit can),
'I am the Prince of England,
Although a murdered man.

'Up from the rolling river,
Up from my slimy bed,
I come, for England calls me!
I hear, though I be dead!

'In England's hour of peril,
At England's high command,
The dead are like the living,
And rise to free the land!'

Thus spake the bleeding Shadow,
And melted into air,
While still the King kept gazing
As if it still were there.

Now what if all the feasters
Had seen the filmy thing!
But no, the Prince's spectre
Was only for the King.

¹ It was the contemporary opinion of all Christendom—and no testimony has since reversed it—that the Prince was stabbed by the King's own hand.

IX.

Draining his trembling goblet
To drown the fear he felt,
The tyrant spilt some wine-drops
Against his buckled belt.

The drops were three red splashes,—
And the King scowled, and said,
'Would that these drops of purple
Were gouts of blood instead!—

'One from the heart of Pembroke,
One from Fitzwalter's own,
And one from flinty Langton's
(If blood be in a stone).

'And would that I could poniard
Each rebel of their host,
Till every mortal traitor
Should be a bleeding ghost!'

Thus to himself he muttered,—
And then to all the crowd
(Who hushed their buzz to listen)
He thus harangued aloud:

X.

'I hate their hellish Charter—
The Devil's own device:
So hark how I have spurned it,
Not once, nor twice, but thrice!

'The Barons first, as Pilgrims,
Swore on Saint Edmund's tomb¹
That I must sign their Charter
Or meet a Tyrant's doom.

'But I, the Lord's Anointed,
Said to those impious men,
"Shall I, the King of England,
Unking me with a pen?"

XI.

'They dogged me then to Brackley—
Where I, who love the chase,
Kept hounds of better breeding,
Curs of a nobler race!

¹ In the town of Bury St. Edmunds.

'Quoth Langton, "Sign the Charter,
Or never from to-day
Shalt thou have leave in Britain
To bring a buck to bay!"

'I answered, "Britain's forests¹
Are mine, and mine alone!
—What fool would sign a warrant
To will away his own?"

XII.

'They mobbed me last in London,
And nailed against my door
The screed which I had mocked at,
And spat upon before.

'Pembroke was there with menace,
Langton with curse and ban,
And mailed Fitzwalter, leading
The pikemen of his clan.

'I scoffed at all their pleading;
I scowled at all their train:
"To me," quoth I, "the sceptre—
To you, the yoke and chain!"

'And ever as they urged me
This answer still I gave:
"The King may be your Tyrant—
He shall not be your slave!"

XIII.

'Yet now agen these rebels,
Who thrice have felt my scorn,
Have writ to me to meet them
Upon the morrow morn.

'Ye gods! the quiet morning
Shall hear a roar indeed!
A meadowful of asses
Will bray at Runnymede!

'But let them sign their Charter
With twenty signet-rings,—
One signet shall be lacking,
And that shall be the King's!'

¹ The forestry clause of the Charter is given at the close of the ballad.

—Then from the ten long tables
Burst a tempestuous blast
Of wild and windy plaudits,
Each louder than the last.

xiv.

'Who says my Court has quit me?
It is a *lie*!' cried he;
'The Court is where the King is . . .
My courtiers? . . . they are *ye*!

'What though your breaths be reeking
With smell of sink and slum?
What though your betters brand ye
As England's froth and scum?

'The froth and scum of England
(Like slime of other slop)
Shall not be slow in mounting!—
Its place is at the top!

'Ye louts, ye shall be lordlings!—
As high as ye were low!—
For whoso would be noble,
The King can make him so.

xv.

'My bounty shall be boundless;
My gifts shall never cease;
For I will shear the Barons
And give to ye the fleece!

'Ye shall have caps with feathers;
Ye shall have boots with bells;
Ye shall have silks from Flanders
To deck your damozels.

'So drink, ye carls and carlines!
Drink to your King! drink deep!
The night was meant for wassail;
The day was meant for sleep.

'Carouse from now till midnight,
Carouse from then till morn!
This was King Richard's palace—
The house where he was born.

XVI.

'Why was I born his brother,
Except to make his throne,
His diadem, his sceptre,
His Lion Heart my own ?

'His Lion Heart, though shrivelled
Within its silver shrine,
Yet beats agen, defiant,
Here in this breast of mine !

'So here in Richard's palace
I swear by Richard's shade
That I will teach these Barons
How Kings shall be obeyed !

'The lord of any castle
Is lord of all its churls :
My castle is the kingdom—
My serfs are Dukes and Earls.

'From *them* to *me* be homage
And not from *me* to *them* !
Down let them kneel, these traitors !
And kiss my garment's hem.'

XVII.

—Then once again the plaudits
Were wild and long and loud,
Until a hush of wonder
Fell on the startled crowd.

For now the Curfew sounded ;
And ere its clang was still
The clattering hoofs of horses
Grew loud on Beaumont Hill.

XVIII.

The drunk and drowsy warder
Who staggered to the gate,
Cried out, 'What lousy laggards
Be ye who come so late ?'

'Three noblemen of England,'
Quoth they, 'who come to bring
A message from the Kingdom,
A mandate to the King.'

Then Pembroke and Fitzwalter
 (Each with his armour on)
And Langton (with his crozier)
 Strode in before King John.

XIX.

The Royal Wolf, whose hunters
 Had tracked him to his lair,
Flashed from his angry eyeballs
 A very wolf's own glare.

Then reddening with his frenzy
 And whitening with his fright,
He cried, 'Why come ye hither—
 Unbidden—and at night?'

XX.

'O King, thy angry Kingdom
 Hath sent us,' answered they,
'To bring to thee a mandate
 Which thou must now obey.

'We come while bats are flying,
 And while the owlet screams,
Lest, had we come by daylight,
 We had disturbed thy dreams.

'But sleep not thou to-morrow,
 For thou the morn shalt rue
Unless thou meet thy Barons
 At drying of the dew!

'They call their meeting early,
 Before the sun is hot—
And hot will be their anger
 If thou shalt meet them not!'

XXI.

Uprose the maddened monarch
 And strode across the floor,
And flung a casement open
 To mark the moon once more.

The silver orb had mounted
 Till it was zenith high,
And now its misty circle
 Was shrouding half the sky.

The boding sign struck terror
Into the tyrant's mind;
He dared not venture forward,
He dared not stay behind.

He turned him to the feasters,
And said, 'The feast is done!'
And all the dumbstruck rabble
Departed one by one.

The spacious hall grew empty:
The three grim lords alone
Stood with the trembling tyrant,
Who tottered like his throne.

XXII.

He flung his crown of ivy
In rage at Langton's feet,
And cried, 'Trample it, traitor,
Thy treason be complete!

'Archbishop or archdevil,
A curse be on thy soul!
But I will sign thy Charter—
Fetch me the hated scroll!'

'Go seek it *thou*,' quoth Langton,
'It seeks not *thee* agen!
It asks of Kings the homage
That Kings have asked of men.

'This homage thou must render;
Which if to-morrow's sun
Shall see thee slow in doing,
Thou art thyself undone.

'So choose thee from thy stable
Thy horse of fleetest speed,
And ride with us till morning
From here to Runnymede.

'There, on the greenest island
In all the river's length,
The Council of the Kingdom
Will meet in battle-strength.

XXIII.

'And first, in friendly concord
(For they be peaceful men),
They will unroll their parchment,
And give thee ink and pen.

'But then each belted Baron
Must see thee sign and seal,
Or else from every scabbard
Shall flash a blade of steel.

'So spring into thy stirrup—
For if thou tardy be,
Another King in England
Shall sign and seal for thee.'

xxiv.

Cried he, 'I have a stallion,
The fleetest ever foaled,
His forefeet shod with silver,
His hindfeet shod with gold;

'His speed is like the falcon's,
Or like an arrow's flight,—
But, by Saint Anne! he stirs not
Out of his stall to-night.'

Quoth they, 'Then on the morrow,
O King, thy kingly sway
Shall have an end in England
Ere ending of the day.'

xxv.

Out of the monarch's stable,
With stately prance and bound,
Was led his horse Abdallah,
Who neighed and pawed the ground.

The King caressed his stallion,
Yet muttered, 'By Saint Anne!
I mount not at the mandate
Of any mortal man.'

'Then mount at *mine*, thou tyrant!'
Outspake a voice, whose tone
Was not from tongue of mortal,
But was a dead man's moan.

And the King cried, 'O Arthur,
Hide thou thy bleeding breast,
Or haste thee back to Heaven,
And I will heed thy hest.'

XXVI.

Then by the moonlit river,
And through the dewy gorse,
King John to fullest gallop
Goaded his fleetest horse.

And since the royal charger
Was fleeter than the three,
The King rode as the leader,—
For so a King should be.

XXVII.

—The moon went down in darkness
Ere yet the East grew grey;
And on and on the monarch
Galloped and led the way.

Through twenty sleeping hamlets
Along the riverside
The King and his three convoys
Kept on their nightlong ride.

No word spake he to either,
But to his horse alone;
Who pricked his ears to listen,
Obeying every tone.

(More royal than his rider! —
For not the whole Earth's face
Could show a horse so noble
That bore a man so base.)

XXVIII.

—The cocks had done their crowing,
The flocks were at their feed,
When Lord Fitzwalter's bugle
Rang out at Runnymede.

The Barons all were waiting,
Each with his weapon drawn;—
For never broke in Britain
A day with such a dawn.

Joined to the living Council
There hovered overhead
The unseen mighty conclave
Of England's patriot dead.

Yea, Heaven and Earth together
Were there—a single band;
For both the dead and living
Arose to free the land.

XXIX.

And when before the despot
The Charter was unrolled,
Thus ran the precious writing
In letters as of gold:

'The Baron in his Castle,
The Yeoman at his plough,
Shall make the law of England
To which the King shall bow.'

The tyrant signed it, sealed it,
And knelt to it in awe,—
For Kings, though high in England,
Are not above the law!

XXX.

From age to age in honour,
The scroll is handed down,
A law above the statute,
A power above the crown.

It is a Nation's refuge
Against a despot's will:
For while the land has monarchs
It may have tyrants still.

So, till the Earth shall perish
The Charter must remain;
Or till in Merrie England
There be no King to reign.¹

¹ An addendum on the origin, history and principal points of this venerated document may seem a useful accompaniment to the foregoing ballad.

Magna Charta changed the English Government from an absolute to a limited Monarchy, and was the first written charter not only of British but (I should add) of American liberty.

The Norman Kings of England, from William the Conqueror to John, had reigned without statutory restriction or legal responsibility. The royal power had never been constitutionally defined, and each successive descendant of the Conqueror had tacitly assumed that the Sovereign of England had an unlimited prerogative. In fact, there was almost nothing to curb or fetter the King's will.

After 150 years of such unlicensed kingly power, the King's authority became—in the hands of King John—no longer endurable by the English nation.

With a unanimous movement the Barons of England, in a body, aided by

a stalwart yeomanry, with arms in their hands, demanded from the King a written charter which should expressly circumscribe—through all future time—the powers of the English crown, and check its encroachment upon the just liberties of the realm.

In the rough Latin of their day, they wrote a document for the King to sign and seal—a document ceding away, henceforth and for ever, all further claim or pretence by any King of England to arbitrary power. This was *Magna Charta*, or the Great Charter.

King John at first, and for many months, refused to sign it.

At three different places—namely, at St. Edmundsbury, at Brackley, and at London—he was confronted by his Barons, who angrily thrust the Charter before him and demanded his signature under a threat of armed compulsion.

His peremptory and offensive refusal on each occasion is easily accounted for by an examination of the Charter; it stripped him clean of all his despotic assumptions, and rendered the King's will wholly subordinate to a written and supreme law of the land.

It tied his hands with many cords. The Charter contained sixty-eight sections, each of which was a limitation of his prerogative as an absolute monarch. A few of these sections will serve as illustrating the spirit of the whole document.

Section 1 says: 'The English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights intact, and its liberties unimpaired upon.' And the King is made to renounce expressly all royal interference with the free election of bishops.

Section 2 provides that a feudal estate, on the death of its owner, shall pass promptly to its rightful heir, without detention by the Crown, and without spoliation for the Crown's exchequer.

Section 8 estops the King from compelling widows to give their hands and lands in marriage against their will.

Section 17 declares that courts of justice, instead of being put to the trouble of following the King's progresses, shall be conveniently held in a fixed place.

Section 20 says: 'No freeman shall be amerced save upon oath of upright men from the neighbourhood.' [This put an end to all arbitrary royal fines—which, in that age, had grown to colossal proportions.]

Section 27 provides that the King's constable shall not take the yeoman's corn without paying for it.

Section 30 says: 'No sheriff or bailiff of ours shall take the horses or carts of any freeman for transport, unless by the will of that freeman.'

Section 31 adds: 'Neither we nor our bailiffs shall take another's wood for castles, or for other private uses, unless by the will of him to whom the wood belongs.'

Section 33 says: 'Henceforth all the weirs in the Thames and Medway, and throughout all England, save on the sea-coast, shall be done away with entirely.' [This was to prevent exclusive grants of valuable fisheries to royal favourites.]

Section 36 declares: 'Henceforth nothing shall be given or taken for a writ of inquest concerning life or limb; but it shall be conceded gratis, and shall not be denied.'

Section 39 (and this is the most important section of all) says: 'No freeman shall be taken, or imprisoned, or disseized, or outlawed, or exiled, or in any way harmed—nor will we go upon him, or send upon him, save by the lawful judgements of his peers, or by the law of the land.'

Section 40 adds: 'To none will we sell, to none deny or delay, right or justice.'

Section 47—known as the forestry clause—says: 'All forests constituted as such in our time shall straightway be annulled.' [This estopped the

King from arbitrarily taking possession of any coveted district of English greenwood and turning it into his private hunting-ground.]

The above extracts are sufficient to show the legal meaning—and also the political value—of *Magna Charta*.

It is the most celebrated of all English State-papers.

'It is still,' says Hallam, 'the keystone of English liberty. All that has been since obtained is little more than confirmation and commentary. And if every subsequent law were to be swept away, there would still remain the bold features that distinguish a free from a despotic monarchy.'

The British Museum possesses (and shows to strangers) what is popularly called the original parchment of *Magna Charta*, with the signatures and seals of King John and his Barons. But there were *several* originals. These were sent at the time to different parts of the kingdom, and were deposited in the Cathedrals. The best-preserved, and now the most legible, of these several original parchments of *Magna Charta* is the one at Lincoln Cathedral. Unfortunately the one in the British Museum is greatly faded—not only by time, but by water and fire.

The author of *Magna Charta* was probably Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury—the greatest statesman of his day—the chief pillar, at once, both of church and state. He was the prime mover and moulding mind of the peaceful revolution against King John—a revolution which, except for the masterly policy of Langton, might have cost a civil war. The Archbishop's chief associate was William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke—a grave and lofty-minded patriot whom Macaulay has eloquently honoured. The third principal figure in the movement was Fitzwalter, a fiery soldier—who was ready, in case of need, to take the field at the head of the joint troops of the Earls and Barons. Fitzwalter's daughter Matilda—with whom King John had had a disastrous love-affair—had been subsequently imprisoned by the King in the Tower of London in order 'that she might tell no tales.' During this imprisonment she died. Her death added a personal bitterness to her father's hatred of the King.

It may be said that, in galloping to Runnymede, King John rode to his death; for he was so broken in spirit by the triumph of the Barons, that he died a twelvemonth afterward, aged forty-nine:—leaving behind him, down to the present day, the worst repute that has ever attached to the memory of an English King.

It is just to add, however, that though the preceding ballad adheres to the general and long-established opinion of King John's character as feeble and cowardly, yet the late historian John Richard Green of Oxford took an opposite view, and declared that King John had the strong intellect and high courage of all the Plantagenets. Ever since Mr. Green's death, his judicious History of the English People has so steadily grown in authority as to have now become almost indisputable. Accordingly, in March, 1896, one morning whilst I was standing by his grave at Mentone, in the Riviera—(on a beautiful hill-top which overlooks the Mediterranean)—I felt such a renewed and increased conviction of the justice of his historical judgements and criticisms, and of the value of the precious book which he has left behind him, that I involuntarily said to the friends who were with me, 'Perhaps, after all, he who was so right on all other points of English history, was right also on King John.' I then and there determined that in republishing the above ballad, I would accompany it with a note giving to the Culprit-King the benefit of the historian's exculpatory remark, which I have cited.

But, of course, this exculpation from the charge of cowardice and poltroonery, does not wash off from King John's reputation the stain of murder; for not even the veneration due to Shakespeare's own account of Prince Arthur's death—(as having occurred by accident in leaping from a wall)—has availed to rid the bad King from the infamy of having assassinated the good Prince.

THE BABBLE O' THE BIRDS.

I.

O SPARROW, say—
What saw ye in the wood to-day?
—I saw the Young Laird wi' a lass,
And they were lying in the grass.

II.

O Robin, tell—
Who was the Young Laird's damozel?
—She was the woodman's daughter Jean,
And tears were tumbling frae her een.

III.

O Lark, declare—
What begged she of her lover there?
—Now tak me to the kirk, she pled,
And mak o' me a woman wed!

IV.

O Finch, how spake
The proud Young Laird o' Lomond Lake?
—He tossed his head, and said in scorn:
I winna wed a bride low-born!

V.

And what, O Wren,
Did the wild wood-nymph answer then?
—False love, I took your vow for true!—
And forth her pruning-knife she drew!

VI.

O Carrion Crow,
And what know ye of a' this woe?
—I snift the Young Laird where he lies,
And I hae just pickt out his eyes!



*A CONFAB WITH A CRICKET.**(Gryllus Campestris.)*

I.

O CRICKET on the Hearth, the chilly dew
That drives thee hither to my evening fire
Will house thee here, I hope, the winter through,
Thou merry minstrel!—of whose strident lyre,
Although it be incessant, yet I never tire.

II.

Thou noisy little negro of the night!—
Thou tiny body with a mighty soul!—
Thy key is pitched to such a shrilly height,
That when thou grindest out thy carmagnole,
Thou scarest back the prowling mouse into his hole.

III.

Thou too art thievish like the thieving mouse,
And wickedly dost pilfer many a crumb;
And yet thou art as welcome to my house
As if King Oberon and his Queen had come
To blow for me their trumpet or to beat their drum.

IV.

I love the noise of rain upon the roof,
Or of the horse when crunching in his stall,
Or of the shuttle in the warp and woof,
Or any cheery hum or cry or call—
But thou, O Cricket, hast the cheeriest tune of all!

V.

The croaking frog, for envy of thy note,
Lies lurking for thee in his reedy fen,
Nor art thou safe from slipping down the throat
Of hungry lizard, salmon, hen or wren—
Save only in the hospitable homes of men.

VI.

And so, O cousin of the katy-did,
Instead of taking lodgings in a tree,
Or gadding as the locust does, amid
The moors and meadows, with the cow and bee,
Thy little head is wise to hide itself with *me*.

VII.

O chimney-haunter! sacred is the creed
That when thou comest to the poor man's cot
Thou bringest to the inmates luck indeed—
Health, peace and plenty—and I know not what:
And *I*, for one, believe it—whether true or not.

VIII.

So let thy coming be a pledge to stay;
And though thou hast a threatening pair of wings,
I prithee use them not to fly away;
But tarry here, and while the kettle sings
Chat to me cheerfully of pleasant household things.

IX.

The fates have fitted thee for household life—
For thou art fortunate, as I am told,
In being married to a silent wife,
Who has no tongue to gossip or to scold—
And such a wife is rare, and worth her weight in gold.

X.

I seldom lack a friend or welcome guest
To grace my table and to try my wine;
But though society be of the best,
However brilliantly the wit may shine,
I always tire of company—except of thine.

XI.

But *thou* remainest when the *rest* are gone,
My one most lively, most loquacious friend;
And through the livelong night until the dawn,
In language which I never comprehend,
Thou tellest me a tale that never has an end.

XII.

The meaning of thy chirp (if I may guess)
Is charitable: and, if understood,
Would prove intended for my happiness—
Or, better still, intended for my good:
So sit and warm thyself—I will pile on the wood.

XIII.

My rude forefathers in a rougher age
Found in thy merry antics such delight,
That they would shut thee prisoner in a cage,
With dozens of thy tribe, to see thee fight,
And hear thee sing in chorus on a winter's night.

XIV.

But thou art safe with *me* from all restraint—
 My home is thine—each corner and each room;
 And should the housemaid offer a complaint,
 I will forbid her ever with her broom
 (Or with her heavy heel) to antedate thy doom!

XV.

Thou art not beautiful, I will confess;
 And when I catch of thee a hurried glimpse—
 If I had never known thee, I might guess
 That thou art one of Satan's blackest imps,
 Or Satan's very self—save only that he limps.

XVI.

Thou nimble scion of those crickets twain
 Who at the Deluge hopped into the Ark,
 Hide at my hearthstone from the winter's rain!—
 Stay till the quenching of my vital spark!—
 And teach me how to take my leap into the dark.¹

THE UNWILLING BACCHANAL.

A LAY OF A MIDNIGHT ORGIE.

PLACE—*Piccadilly.*TIME—*Silly Season.*

I.

I WENT to the Cock and Hen
 One evening at ten.

I noticed a sign that hung
 On spigot and bung.

The letters were painted red,
 And temptingly said:

A GUEST WHO WILL TELL A TALE
 PAYS NOTHING FOR ALE.

¹ 'When the cricket *shrills*,' says Harris, 'he raises his wing-covers a little, and shuffles them together lengthwise, so that the projecting vanes of one are made to grate against those of the other.'

II.

I thought it a crazy rule
Devised by a fool.
So, draining my flowing mug,
I said, with a shrug,
'O publican, this is good,
And drawn from the wood :
'But *gratis*? Then please explain
What profit you gain !'
'On telling your tale,' quoth he,
'Perhaps you will see.'

III.

The guests, who were jolly chaps
(A dozen, perhaps),
Said merrily, 'Let the story
Be long—and be gory ;
'Begin it and take your time—
And give us a crime—
'A horror, with ghosts, to thrill
The blood to a chill !'

IV.

—I answered, 'let me relate
King Pharamond's fate :
—'King Pharamond reigned in Gaul
(If ever at all) :
'No chronicles now remain
Of Pharamond's reign.
'Yet what if his town were sacked
In fable or fact ?
'How oft at a tavern-table
A fact is a fable !'

V.

—My hearers had now increased
To forty at least :
The host, with his bill of fare,
Stood back of my chair,

And pointed to '*quail on toast*'—
(The cunning old host !)

'But no,' I replied, 'I hate
A supper so late :

'To pamper the appetite
Is madness at night :

'My tale is of Death and Doom—
So let me resume :

VI.

—'King Pharamond, it appears,
Was young for his years.

'This being confessed, the rest
Is readily guessed.

'The cause of our primal woe
Was woman, you know !

'Her ways, when the world began,
Were fatal to man :

'Her ways, till the world shall end,
Will never amend !

VII.

('A morsel of bread and cheese,
Mine host, if you please !')

VIII.

—'King Attila's boats in line
Descended the Rhine.

'King Pharamond's frightened Franks
Defended the banks.

'Defended? Defence was vain !—
So when it was plain

'That Pharamond's city-wall
Was ready to fall,

'He leaned on the coping-stone,
And said with a groan :

IX.

('O Thomas, this cheese, egad,
Is mouldy and bad !')

And Thomas (the waiter) said,
*'Your honour, instead,
'Could manage to eat, no doubt,
A couple of trout.'*

I ordered what scarce I needed,
And thus I proceeded :)

X.

—'Of course, as the King looked down,
He feared for his town.

'The shriek of an owl would start
A throb in his heart.

'A swash of the flowing river
Would give him a shiver.

'For how can a man be bold
When guilty and old?

'A man with a sin confest
Has peace in his breast :

'But peace is a thing forbidden,
The sin being hidden.

'The King—who had done, in fact,
A horrible act—

'Had now for his last resource—
(*A lemon? Of course!*)

'*It gives to the fish a relish!*)
—The deed? It was hellish!

'The work of a fiend, I say,'—
—(And here, by the way,

'*A hock,*' quoth Thomas, '*brings out
The flavour of trout.'*

'*The fish,*' I replied, '*are fine—
So bring me the wine!*—

'*And pass me the pepper—thanks!')*
—'The King of the Franks,

'Surveying the starry vault,
—(*And also the salt*)—

'And taking his final view,
—(*The vinegar too*)—

'Stole up to a lonely loft,
In which he had oft,
'On nights that had long gone by,
Received (on the sly)
'A beautiful Gothic dame,
Whose guttural name
'I happen, to my regret,
Just now to forget.—

XI.

(*'But oysters, as I remember,
Come in with September!
'If breaded before you fry them,
I think I will try them—
'A dozen of Natives—Dutch—
Not buttered too much.)*

XII.

—'Now though, to his chamber dim,
At Pharamond's whim,
'His charmer would wend her way
At night where he lay,
'Yet always before the dawn
The witch would be gone.
'For then to another's bed
She furtively fled!
'A woman is sure to rue
A dalliance with two.
'The King, as you know, was one:
The other?—his son!

XIII.

'The nature of love is fickle—
(*I wish for a pickle—
'And also the mustard—French—
—The beautiful wench
'Had never the least desire,
Of course, for the sire.*

- 'Her single (yet double) care
Was thus to ensnare
'The Prince for his bonny self--
The King for his pelf.
'And mark you—it all took place,
This shame and disgrace—
'This more than disgrace and shame,
This criminal game—
'It happened (suppose we say)
A year and a day
'Ere Attila, Scourge of God,
Was sent with a rod—
'A besom of Heaven—to thwack
King Pharamond's back.

XIV.

- (*'This ketchup, my boy, is thick,—
And dry as a stick!'*)

XV.

- Here Thomas, who feared my frown,
Put craftily down
A sherry of ancient brand
In reach of my hand.
I drank it, and then for sport
I ordered a port.)

XVI.

- 'A woman, at heart,' said I,
'Is fond of a lie :
'King Pharamond's crafty leman
Was woman and demon :
'For while to the King pretending
A love never-ending,
'Her heart—(for I think she *had* one,
Albeit a *bad* one)—
'Aspired to the Prince alone—
As heir to the throne.

'She said to him, "By the powers,
This passion of ours

"Would yield us a keener zest
If put to a test!"

'The youth, who was brave and candid,
Then boldly demanded,—

"What test would you fain impose,
My lily, my rose?"'

XVII.

('A sausage were well, I think,'
Said Tom, with a wink ;

'Or possibly you could try
A terrapin-pie.'

My appetite strangely grew—
I ordered the two.)

XVIII.

—'The beautiful Goth was vicious
And over-ambitious :

'She played for the Prince's hand—
Audacity grand !

'But just as a bud is nipped
Or pinion is clipped,

'Or taper is set afire
To flash and expire,

'The Destinies dashed away
Her hopes in a day !'

XIX.

*(I ordered, just here, a sliver
Of anchovied liver.)*

XX.

—'The Prince, being warm with wine,
Had bathed in the Rhine ;

'And afterward never more
Had come to the shore.

—'Or such was the false report
That startled the court.

- “But no,” said the lady, “no!
It cannot be so!
- “Not even his cap was found—
He never was drowned:
- “I think he was murdered! yea!
For mark what I say!—
- “Whenever I praised the Prince
His father would wince.
- “So jealousy was the root,
And murder the fruit!
- “And lest he should murder *me*,
My cue is to flee!”

XXI.

- ‘And then with her guilty gains
She fled his domains.’

XXII.

- (And here I remark, in passing,
That Tom, though amassing
In sixpenny tips, I knew,
The wealth of a Jew—
Yet always was quite as willing
To pocket a shilling.
He artfully said, ‘*The house
Is famous for grouse.*’
I nodded, and answered, ‘*Bring
A breast and a wing.*’)

XXIII.

- ‘King Pharamond saw with woe
The march of his foe.
‘The War, as I said before,
Was now at his door.
—‘King Pharamond gives a wheeze
And clutches his knees!
‘He wedges between them his thin
Cadaverous chin!

'He plucks at his beard and hair,
And says, in despair:

XXIV.

*('Oh, where is the chow-chow jar?
How thoughtless you are!—*

'You even forget the curry!)
—The King in his worry

'Is wild with the madding thought
Of what he has wrought,—

'And thus he attempts to plead
Excuse for the deed:

“My son, like a fowler, set
His cunningest net;

“And so, as the dove was mine,
I feared his design;

“For youth, as the old discover,
Is good in a lover!

“A woman is apt to hunger
For one who is younger!

“Whenever the Prince was near,
The lady would leer!

“Whenever the Prince was gone,
The lady would yawn!

“Now this being hard to bear,
I ended it there!

“I poisoned him! Wrong, no doubt!
But will it come out?

“Who saw it? Myself alone!
It cannot be known!

“Yet certainly *she* must know—
Or why did she go?

“—Instead of her fleeing thus
And making a fuss,

“I thought she would proudly stay,
And haughtily say—

"As soon as the hour was ripe,"—
(*Now grill me a snipe,—*

*'Allowing, you know, each leg
The yolk of an egg.'*)

XXV.

(Mine host, who had taken toddy,
Already was noddy.—

And Thomas, from force of habit,
Suggested Welsh rabbit!

—*I ordered, at Tom's suggestion,
The relish in question.)*

XXVI.

—'Now ye who attend my tale
Prepare to grow pale!

'The moon was beginning to shine
And swim in the Rhine.

'The King at the image gazed
Until he was dazed.

'It seemed to his tortured soul
The chalice!—the bowl!—

'The cup that had lately done
The death of his son!

'So there, in the flowing stream,
With glitter and gleam,

'The crime that he hoped to hide
Was writ on the tide!—

'The cup, as a tell-tale, lay,—
Not floating away,—

'But warning the world to think
He poisoned the drink!'

XXVII.

(Here Thomas, the stupid ass,
Brought *pâté de chasse*.

I didn't myself *inquire* for it,
Nor feel a *desire* for it.

Yet, tempted by truffled game,
I sampled the same.

—Too rich!—for it made my head
As heavy as lead.)

XXVIII.

'The monarch begins to freeze!
What is it he sees?

'Unchallenged by sentry-post,
In marches a ghost!—

'And straight to the King it glides
With terrible strides,—

'And close to the King it stands—
A bowl in its hands!

'It gibbers, and tries to speak,
And says with a squeak—

XXIX.

'(*Oh, bring me a Salad!—plain—
A simple Romaine.*)

XXX.

—'For what is a King? A man
Whose days are a span!

'King Pharamond's span is narrow^{ing}!
His horror is harrowing!

'A woman with yellow hair
Approaches him there!

'She bends with a panther's crouch
And creeps to his couch.

'She leaps with a panther's spring
And throttles the King.

"Nay, offer no piteous plea,
But listen!" cries she.

"I wept for my honour sold
To thee for thy gold!

"I never have sold it since
To King or to Prince!

"I searched for a Sibyl wise
To read me the skies:

- “Who said to me, ‘Thou shalt bear
A kingdom an heir:
- “The King of an Eastern land
Shall sue for thy hand!
- “This King of the East, a Hun,
Shall follow the sun,
- “And march on a victor’s quest
To conquer the West:
- “And *thou*, as his wedded bride,
Shalt ride at his side:
- “For *thou* art to deal a blow
To finish his foe.
- “So whet thee a dagger bright
And go in the night—
- “When none shall be there to see—
And carry thy key
- “And open, as oft before,
King Pharamond’s door,
- “And say to the reprobate—”
(*O Tom, it is late!*)
- ‘So mull me, before I go,
A demi-Bordeaux,—*
- ‘And see that you keep the pot,
Not boiling, but hot.)*

XXXI.

- ‘Arrayed in her robe Tartáric
The lady barbaric
- ‘Cries out to the panting King,
“I come and I bring
- “Another—beneath my girth—
Awaiting his birth;
- “Who, ere he shall draw his breath,
Shall leap at thy death!
- “For I, by my holy vows,
Am Attila’s spouse!
- “The deed that I do is done
For Attila’s son!”

XXXII.

—‘She added to what she spoke
The flash of a stroke,
‘And Pharamond, pale and haggard,
Exclaimed as he staggered—

XXXIII.

‘(*Now bring me a B. and S.!*)’
And here I confess
I ordered eftsoons a second—
(The drinks being reckoned
In chalk, in the ancient style)—
And Tom with a smile
(For Tom was a rogue) inferred
I ordered a third!

XXXIV.

He brought it—I saw him book it—
I fancy I took it!
I hadn’t the slightest trouble
In now seeing double.
These Openers of my Eyes¹
Revealed a surprise:
The guests, to my great dismay,
Had stolen away!
The host, with a horrid sound,
Terrific, profound,
Applauded my tale of gore
With snore upon snore!

XXXV.

I shook him and said, ‘*I go—
How much do I owe!*’

XXXVI.

Quoth he, as he took his chalk,
‘A guest who will talk—

¹ This drink is called the ‘eye-opener.’

- '(And *you*, Sir, O goodness gracious
Were *very* loquacious!)—
- 'A talker, I say, will first
Feel nothing but thirst;
- 'But soon, in his empty maw
A hunger will gnaw!
- 'He scruples to eat at night,
Yet longs for a bite.
- 'Now merely a snack, he thinks,
Will do—(with his drinks);
- 'But no—he will stuff his crop!—
He orders a chop,
- 'Or cutlet of veal or lamb,
Or jigger of ham;
- 'Or, if he be bold and rash,
He ventures a hash,
- 'Or likes (with a glass of grog)
The leg of a frog,
- 'Or shrimps, or a roasted crab:
Till, what with his gab,
- 'And what with the time he takes
In jokes that he makes—
- 'Especially if he runs
To villainous puns—
- 'He guzzles and eats until . . .
He swears at his bill!
- 'Your own, as you see, is scored
In chalk on the board:
- 'A guinea, by my account,
Is just the amount:
- 'My figures are seldom wrong—
Your story was long!'

xxxvii.

—I found in my purse, all told,
A guinea in gold:

The deuce! I had been a ninny,
And eaten my guinea!

I hadn't a bare baubee
For Thomas's fee!

I gaped at the sign that hung
On spigot and bung:

A GUEST WHO WILL TELL A TALE
PAYS NOTHING FOR ALE.

'Mine host, I have much misread
Your offer,' I said:

'I saw it at first—amazed,
And thought you were crazed!

'Now telling a tale, I think,—
As pay for a drink,—

'May look like a foolish rule,—
But *I* am the fool!'



GREAT TOM OF OXFORD.

The Curfew-Bell, formerly at Osney Abbey, and now at Christ Church.

AN HISTORICAL BALLAD.

It is to the time of King Henry the First that the incidents in this tale of 'Great Tom' can be authentically traced.

Cast in the twelfth century, and re-cast in the seventeenth, this famous bell (weighing 18,000 pounds) was for six hundred years the largest in England, and still finds but few superiors, either in magnitude or melody.

It has a romantic history.

Osney Abbey—which no longer exists—was during the Middle Ages the largest monastery in England.

It occupied, with its extensive buildings, its orchards and its 'God's Acre,' a green island in the River Isis at Oxford, and stood until the Tudor days a lofty landmark facing Beaumont Palace on the one hand, and St. George's Castle on the other.

Although all the precincts of the University were early noted for noble buildings, yet the 'Abbaye of Osenaye' (as it was anciently called) was on the whole—especially during the Plantagenet period—the 'show-piece' of Oxford.

This was not only because its architecture and outer beauties were attractive, but also because its larder, dormitory and inner comforts were still more tempting—the monastery being a generous hostelry, with a capacity to lodge and feed pilgrims by hundreds at a time.

In fact, Osney Abbey afforded to mediaeval travellers—(and often without exacting from them the slightest payment or fee for bed or board)—such a hospitality as cannot always be now had for a high price at a modern hotel.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, after visiting such of the Abbey ruins as remained till his time, turned angrily on his heel, and exclaimed, as he walked away, 'I viewed them with indignation!'

Anthony à Wood (the Oxford antiquarian), in writing with a true local pride of the memorable Osney Abbey, said in his quaint chronicle:—

'The monastery had magnificent towers, . . . and the rows of pinnacles which adorned them were so grand and pleasing that strangers from far and near came to take drafts of the same.'

And he added that the belfry had 'a large and melodious ring of bells so famed for their tuneableness that foreigners travelling in England went to hear them chimed!'

After the secularization of this rich Abbey by Henry VIII, the largest of its bells—the bell known as 'Great Tom'—was transferred by Cardinal Wolsey to Christ Church, where it has since remained.

It occupies a commanding position, in a belfry by itself, over the college gate: a gate which—long after Wolsey's day—was finally crowned with a dome by Sir Christopher Wren.

'Great Tom' was the bell which Cardinal Wolsey hoped would announce to the University his election to the Papal Chair at Rome.

His hope was disappointed.

Otherwise this ballad might have had to deal chiefly with Cardinal Wolsey's—rather than with Friar Rudolph's—priestly ambition.

But the story of the big bell—even without the 'Great Cardinal' to figure in it dramatically—seems almost too strange to be true.

Accordingly, in order to authenticate the singular chronicle, it will be corroborated at its close by an Appendix of documentary evidence.

I.

THROUGH all the day, in Oxford town,
There sleeps in Wolsey tower
A mighty bell of old renown—
Awaking when the sun is down,
To toll the Curfew-hour.

O roaring Tom, though thou art hung
Within the Church's pale,
Yet every night when thou art rung,
Thou tellest with a brazen tongue
A very brazen tale!

II.

—When Oxford town was fresh and new,
The Church, before the schism,
Gave to the Lord His homage due
In wafers and in wax, in lieu
Of tract and catechism.

Then Rudolph was a beggar priest,
Who loved the Church so well
That night and day he never ceased
To crave a crozier, or at least
An abbey and a bell.

This abbey, with a faith supreme,
And with a hope sublime,
He reared in many a rapturous dream,
And fancied how the spire would gleam
And how the bell would chime.

The fane, thus fashioned of a cloud—
An abbey in the air!—
All planned, erected, and endowed,
Arose the loftiest when he bowed
The lowliest at his prayer.

III.

'But neither stone nor wood have I,
Nor hammer, nor a nail!'
Quoth the poor priest; and with a sigh
He put his pious purpose by,
And felt that it must fail.

So Rudolph grew the humblest friar
That ever shaved his crown,
A monk the bound of whose desire
Was but his little chapel-choir—
The smallest in the town.

IV.

Near by, and on a parapet
Whose ruins now are grand¹,
Sir Robert d'Oyley, banneret,
Then kept his Norman banner set
As lord of all the land.

He owned the mill at Osney pond;
He owned the turnpike road;
He owned (so ran the deed and bond)
The whole green group of isles beyond
Round which the Isis flowed;

He owned each salmon that would bite,
Each plover that was slain,
Each clover-blossom, red or white;
And almost, though perhaps not quite,
He owned the dew and rain.

¹ St. George's Castle.

V.

The meadow fairest to his view,
And fittest to his need,
Was where, besides the rain and dew,
The river split itself in two
To water Osney mead.

Sir Robert here had parked his deer,
And here his swans could swim,
And here, at evening, to his ear
Came wafted (from the chapel near)
The chaunted vesper-hymn.

And oft Sir Robert would declare,
In walking through his grounds,
'I would not sell this island fair
For all the Devil has to spare,
Were it a thousand pounds.'

VI.

This thrifty, bluff, and jovial lord
Had found the joy of life
In adding to his herd and hoard
But not in sharing bed and board
With any wedded wife.

'A wife is good to have,' quoth he,
'And worth her weight in gold;
But sweet is freedom to the free,
And when I wed, it shall not be
Till I am grey and old.'

VII.

Yet when at last his back grew bent,
And when his head grew hoar,
Sir Robert felt but half content
With taking toll and tithe and rent,
And wanted one thing more.

Though old and rich, he lacked an heir—
And so he wooed and won
A youthful damsel, tall and fair,
Who soon gave hope that she would bear
The aged sire a son.

Sir Robert rubbed his wrinkled hands,
And blessed his honeymoon,
And thanked his stars that all his lands
Were promised thus in Hymen's bands
A lawful heir so soon.

VIII.

But trouble, like a prickly brier,
Juts from the rose of joy,—
And now the proud, expectant sire
Feared that the child of his desire
Might fail to be a boy.

For both in castle and in cot,
Alike to poor and rich,
A babe begot may prove (God wot!)
Either to be a boy or not,
The Lord alone knows which.

In hope of tempting Providence
To turn the doubtful scale,
Sir Robert tried, at great expense,
To bribe the Heavens to grant him thence
As heir direct, a male.

So daily as his bride increased,
And rounded to the view,
He spread for all the poor a feast,—
And Father Rudolph, hungry priest,
Added his blessing too.

IX.

The bride—the mother soon to be—
Big with Sir Robert's heir,
Had been a maid of such degree
That England's king had bent a knee
To Edith Forne the fair.

And if King Harry¹ had possessed
A power to kings denied,
To wed the maids they love the best,
Sir Robert would have gone unblest
Of such a saintly bride.

She helped the parish in its needs,
And showed such special bias,
For so devoutly counting beads,
That Father Rudolph said, 'She leads
A life profoundly pious.'

¹ King Henry I.

X.

If in the monk's suspicious mind
A grain of doubt had room,
It was perhaps that he divined
A worldliness in one inclined
To wear a scarlet plume.

The King to Edith Forne had said,
'Take this,—and when we part,—
And when thou goest to be wed,
Wear thou my feather on thy head—
My image in thy heart.'

And now in every breeze that blew
The lady's plume would quiver;
But though it was of royal hue,
Yet old Sir Robert never knew
How royal was the giver.

XI.

One day, when Edith's girth was great,
And when her time was nigh,
She took a stroll, alone and late,
In Osney mead, to meditate,
And watch the sunset sky.

But though to watch the sunset sky
Would oft to Edith bring
A drop of dew to either eye,
Yet now her lids were hot and dry
With longing for the King.

She crossed her hands upon her breast,
And sighed to see his face—
Till, as the sun illumed the West,
A bird called to her from his nest
And mocked her doleful case.

XII.

This bird, a magpie, on an oak
That shaded Osney mill,
Had saucy ways of hailing folk
And answering back to all who spoke,
As any magpie will.

The pie would eat from Rudolph's hand,
Or perch on Rudolph's shoulder:
But Edith did not understand
That such a bird was in the land,
For Rudolph had not told her.

XIII.

The scarlet plume on Edith's head
Flamed like the dying day,—
And so the magpie, hating red,
And being but a bird ill-bred,
Shrieked, as a magpie may.

And Edith's scarlet plume without
Matched with her heart within—
For there is many a dame, no doubt,
Who in a heart the most devout
May hide a scarlet sin.

XIV.

Now Edith fair was just from prayer—
For, at each vesper-tide,
She daily laid her unborn care
Low at the shrine—(it still is there)—
Of chaste Saint Freidiswide¹.

XV.

But prayer, that makes the pure so bold,
Emboldened not the dame
Who heard the magpie scoff and scold—
For she imagined what he told,
And that he named her name.

'O fie! O fie!'—(so said the pie)—
Till, faint with fear profound,
Poor Edith, dreading lest the cry
Should catch the ears of passers by,
Sank prostrate to the ground.

The bird, now bolder than before,
Flew at her head to scan
The fiery feather which she wore,
And which he pecked and pulled and tore,—
Till Edith rose and ran.

XVI.

She ran with fleet and frightened feet
To where her vesper prayer
In chaste Saint Freidiswide's retreat
Was scarcely cold—in hope to meet
The priest still tarrying there.

¹ Spelt also Frideswide and Frevisse.

And Rudolph was surprised, no doubt
(As well he might have been),
That she, so lately rustling out,
Had turned her silken self about
So soon to rustle in.

XVII.

'O holy father!' Edith cried,
'I beg a boon of thee,
For as I walked the water-side
A great bird—bold, and fiery-eyed—
Screamed at me from a tree!

'Full angerly and loud he chid,
And put me to the blush,
And seemed to hint at something hid,
And bade me do as he should bid
Or he would never hush.

'But when I asked what I must do,
His answer was not clear—
Though at my very face he flew
And thrust his beak of ebony hue
Into my very ear.

'So come with me, I beg of thee,
From here to Osney mill,
And pray the bird upon the tree
To make his meaning plain to me
That I may do his will.'

XVIII.

Thus Edith said—with lips as pale
As if the dead should speak;
And then she covered with her veil
The red confusion which her tale
Flashed into either cheek.

XIX.

'My daughter, by my cowl and stole,
And by the rood,' quoth he,
'Thy look is full of dread and dole—
There is a sin upon thy soul—
Confess it now to me.'

XX.

At first the lady frowned a frown
Of innocence austere,
But soon through all her silken gown
A tremor rippled up and down
As pride gave way to fear.

At last, with all her brain aflame,
And with a throbbing breast,
And with a tongue that shrank to name
The secret of her love and shame,
Fair Edith thus confessed :—

XXI.

'O that, like pure Saint Freidiswide,
Whom princes vainly wooed,
I too, in cold and maiden pride,
With chaste refusal had denied
A monarch when he sued!

'Before I wore Sir Robert's ring,
Who took me for a maid,
I listened to my lord the King—
And now my sin—a living thing—
Has made me sore afraid.

'Beneath my heart, from morn till night,
From night agen till morn,
There leaps a babe, with main and might,
As if impatient for the light,
And eager to be born.

'He thrusts me with his hands and feet,
And waxes fierce and wild,
And burns with anger at the cheat—
For well he knows the base deceit,
And is King Harry's child.

'The more he greatens with my girth,
The more he scorns the lie,
And threatens that the whole wide Earth
Shall know how kingly is his birth,
And how forsworn am I.

'But though he threaten, chide or warn,
And though a prince he be,
I would not fear a babe unborn,
Save that the herald of his scorn
Mocks me from yonder tree.

'For what will all the people say,
And what my lord, forsooth,
If when they walk the King's highway
They hear a bird upon a spray
Proclaim the dreadful truth?

'Oh would that I could cast a stone
To crush his chattering beak
Ere yet to all the town be known
The horrid and accusing tone
With which he dares to speak!'

XXII.

'Cast not a stone,' the priest replied,
'Lest thou should'st miss thy aim,
And lest through all the country-side
The bird go flying far and wide,
And tattle to thy shame.

'But let us hasten to his nest,
And ask of him betimes—
Since now thy sin hath been confessed—
What penance will atone the best
For such a crime of crimes.'

XXIII.

The twain then crossed, from dyke to weir,
That meadow, green and level,
Wherein Sir Robert parked his deer,
And which Sir Robert would not hear
Of selling to the Devil.

XXIV.

Now to the Devil (or the Deil,
However named or writ)
A pious monk will never kneel,
Yet often slily will appeal
To borrow subtile wit.

XXV.

That Rudolph now such aid besought
There cannot be a question,
For down he bent his brow in thought,
And from the Fire Infernal caught
The flash of a suggestion.

Thought Rudolph, 'From so grand a dame,
Trembling with guilt and terror,
What ought the Holy Church to claim
As proper price to purge her blame
And expiate her error?'

XXVI.

—To make the lady pure indeed,
Chaste as before she fell,
The monk resolved, with holy greed,
To claim no less than Osney mead,
An abbey and a bell!

XXVII.

On went the twain, with pious zeal,
To where the Osney ferns
Still fringe the haunt of trout and eel,
And where the ancient water-wheel
Of Osney mill still turns.

XXVIII.

Out hopping from his house of straw,
Just wakened from a doze,
The bird whom Edith held in awe
Rebuked her with a churlish caw
For troubling his repose.

XXIX.

The West, that now was all ablaze,
Set Osney flume aglow:
For the clear water caught the rays
And flashed them up to Edith's gaze
From crystal depths below.

XXX.

The pie, by chance, let fall a glance
Into the glassy flume,
And there, with curious eyes askance,
Saw mirrored in the clear expanse
The lady's scarlet plume.

XXXI.

The scarlet plumes now being two
(One nodding in the stream),
The pie was puzzled at the view,
And did what any pie would do—
He gave a deafening scream.

XXXII.

A sin awakes a thousand fears,
And Edith in dismay,
Half frantic at the creature's jeers,
Pressed her white hands against her ears
To keep the sound away.

But still she heard it all the same,
For louder yet he jeered,
And chid her with such bitter blame
That, in her fright, the desperate dame
Thus threatened whom she feared:—

XXXIII.

'Beware, O bird that canst not sing,
How thou dost talk instead,
For thus to prate of such a thing
Is treason to our Lord the King,
And he will have thy head!'

XXXIV.

Quoth Rudolph, 'Seek not to appal
A pie so addle-pated,
For probably a head so small
Would fear but little, if at all,
To be decapitated.

'But *I* can menace, not in vain,
His very soul's salvation,
For I will bid the bird explain
His harsh portentous cry—on pain
Of excommunication.'

So Rudolph, crucifix in hand,
Spoke Latin to the pie,
And stood awhile as one may stand
Who, having made a dread demand,
Awaits a meek reply.

XXXV.

The pie, unmeek, disdained to speak—
And long the listeners waited,
Until, in pique, he shook his beak,
And gave a shriek that seemed in Greek,
Which Rudolph thus translated:—

'The bird,' quoth he, 'has come to tell
That to thy dire disgrace,
Unless thou hide thy secret well,
The eyes of Earth and Heaven and Hell
Shall see it in thy face.

'But thou canst hide it, if thou wilt,
From every eye alike,
For Holy Church shall purge thy guilt
If thou wilt have an abbey built
From here to yonder dyke.'

XXXVI.

Then Rudolph, breaking off a reed,
Marked out upon the moor
From weir to dyke—across the mead—
The acres that the Church would need
To make the lady pure.

XXXVII.

Sore troubled at the great demands
Made by the greedy friar,
The trembling lady wrung her hands,—
For who could claim Sir Robert's lands
Without Sir Robert's ire?

'But I will hie me home with speed
And clasp his knees,' she cried,
'And I will plead for Osney mead:
But oh, my soul is sick indeed
Lest I should be denied.'

XXXVIII.

Home to her tower in Oxford town
The lady Edith sped,
And loosed the girdle of her gown,
And laid her burdened body down
Beside her lord in bed.

Quoth she, 'What woman knows her fate
Who has a babe to bear?
And since my travail will be great,
Death may await thy wedded mate
As birth awaits thine heir.

'So if, my lord, thou holdest dear
Heaven's gift to thee through me,
Make thou an offering—free and clear—
Of Osney mead, from dyke to weir,
To Holy Church in fee.

'Make all the meadow hallowed ground,
And lay me there with tears,
And build above my lowly mound
A lofty abbey, turret-crowned,
To stand a thousand years.

'And in the belfry be there hung
A bell of such a chime,
That ages hence it shall be rung,
And shall be called the sweetest tongue
Of all the olden time.'

XXXIX.

Thus spake she to the doting man,
Who, with his arms around her
(And wondering why her tongue so ran),
Now promised to fulfil the plan
And be the abbey's founder.

'Swear it,' quoth she, 'that it may be
A vow thou durst not break,
And I, thy faithful wife, agree—
Whatever thou shalt ask of me—
To do it for thy sake.'

XL.

'I ask of thee,' quoth he, 'to bear
No weak and puny girl,
But stalwart boy, robust and fair—
Fruit of my body, born my heir,
And fit to be an Earl.'

XLI.

Then Edith laid the old man's hand
Above the unborn child,
Who, like a billow to the land,
Now rolled, as when the storm is grand
And when the wave is wild.

Quoth she, 'No weak and puny girl
I to my lord shall bring,
Nor boy with spirit of a churl,
But man-child fit to be an Earl—
Yea, fit to be a King.'

Her travail then, that very night,
Rushed on with rapid throes,
Till piteous was the lady's plight,
Whose babe came leaping to the light
Just as the morn arose.

She bore a boy—not slight and slim,
With feeble cry and stir,
But lusty, and so large of limb
That mortal breath passed into *him*
By passing out of *her*.

Yet ere the new-made mother died,
She kissed the new-born thing,
While, more than with a mother's pride,
She blushed as in the babe she spied
The image of the King.

XLII.

Sir Robert saw the lily wilt
That bore the bud, and said
(Not guessing at the lady's guilt)
'O Rudolph, be an abbey built
In memory of our dead!'

And all the monks with one accord
Said, 'Let the pie be sainted!'
So, on the walls, for his reward
(With other angels of the Lord),
His effigy was painted.

XLIII.

Those monks are now in Heaven or Hell
(Or some in each—who knows?)
And long ago their abbey fell,
But nightly yet its booming bell
Tells how that abbey rose.

The bell that hung in Osney spire
Now hangs in Wolsey tower,
And with a tongue that cannot tire,
Whose echo rolls through half the shire,
It clangs the curfew-hour.

O roaring Tom, be nightly rung!
 Or if thy curfew fail,
 Still be thy heavy hammer swung—
 If only that thy brazen tongue
 May tell thy brazen tale!¹

¹ This complex ballad—consisting not merely of a tale, but of several separate tales woven into one—furnishes an uncommon example of a mixed and crowded tradition which nevertheless, in all its many parts, adheres with close exactness to authentic history—as the following corroborative series of citations will show:—

'William the Conqueror . . . bestowed Oxford Castle on Robert D'Oyley, a favourite follower.'—Moore's *Historical Handbook of Oxford*.

'Robert, a nephew of the first castellan, wedded Edith Forne, a concubine of Henry the First.'—John Richard Green's *Early History of Oxford*.

'This Robert d'Oille, the 2, had a wife caullid Edythe Forne, a woman of fame, and highly estimid with King Henry, by whose procuracion Robert wedded her. . . . Edythe usid to walke out Oxford Castelle to solace, & oftentymes when yn a certen place in a tre as often as she came a certen Pyes usid to gather to it & ther to chattrre & as it were to speke onto her. Edythe much marveling at this matier was sumtyme sore ferid as by a wonder. Whereupon she sent for one Radulf a chanon of St. Frideswide's, a man of a vertuous life, & her confessor, askyng hym counsel, to whom he answerid after that he had seene the fascion of the Pyes chattering only at her cumming that she should build some church or monastery in that place. Then she entretid her husband to build a priorie, & so he did, making Radulph the first prior of it.'—Leland's *Account of Oxford and Oseney Abbaye*.

'This lady used to please herself, when living with her husband in the castle, with walking by the riverside, and under the shady trees. Frequently observing the magpies gathered together on a tree by the river, making a great chattering as it were at her, she was induced to ask Radolphus, a canon of St. Frideswide, and her confessor, the meaning of it. Madame, says he, these are not Pyes; they are so many souls in Purgatory, uttering, in their way, their complaints aloud to you . . . and he humbly hoped, for the sake of the love of God, she would build a church,' &c.—Anthony à Wood's *Ancient and Present State of Oxford*.

'Little does the traveller imagine as the train passes by the cemetery, just outside the Great Western Station at Oxford, that he is going over the site of what was one of the grandest monastic piles in England.'—Goldie's *Bygone Oxford*.

'Oseney Abbaye was the envy of all other religious houses in England and beyond the seas.'—Sir John Peschell.

'In the abbey church was buried Edyth Doyly, circa 1152, on the North side of the altar in a religious habit.'—Anthony à Wood.

'There lyeth an Image of Edyth of stone, in the Abbite of a Vowess, holding a Hart in her right Hand, on the North Side of the high altare. . . . The inscription was Memorabilis Matrona Deo devota. . . . The cumming of Edyth to Oseneye, and Radulph waiting on her, and the Tre with the chattering Pyes be painted in the Waule of the church, over Edyth Tombe in Oseneye priorye.'—Leland.

'Here was a large and melodious Ring of Bells, the best as was thought, in England . . . deep and very musical . . . so famed for their tunableness that foreigners traveling in England went to here them chimed. . . . These bells, at the pulling down Osney cathedral or abbey, together with a large

KING HELGI TO QUEEN SIGRUN.

In the seventh year after the King's death, the Queen, on making a pilgrimage to his cairn, heard him say to her—

I.

WHEN thou art gay, my darling,
I know it in my tomb,—
For on my breast the roses
Then burst afresh in bloom.

II.

But when thy heart is troubled,—
Then every withered bud
Shoots down a thorn that pricks me
And draws a drop of blood.

THE DIVINE ALTERNATIVE.

I.

'MY child, thou art going astray!' said God,
'So hearken, and let Me *advise* thee!'
—His warning, though kind indeed,
I heard—but I failed to heed.

II.

'Ungrateful!' He said (and He raised His rod),
'To turn thee I must *chastise* thee!'
—So then, with a scourge indeed,
He smote me—and now I bleed.

clock-bell hanging in the same tower, were translated to Christchurch, and put up in their steeple, where they yet remain. . . . Thomas, recast in 1630, now called Great Tom of Christchurch, and said to be the largest bell in England, is six feet in diameter and eighteen in compass.'—Anthony à Wood.

'St. Frideswide, patroness of Oxford, was daughter of Didan, prince of Oxford. Algar, prince of Mercia, smitten with her beauty and virtues, and not being able to overcome her resolution of chastity, gave so far a loose to the reins of his criminal passion, as to lay a snare to carry her off. The virgin escaped his pursuit. After her death, in the eighth century, she became the patroness of the City and University of Oxford.'—Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.

AN ATTIC PHILOSOPHER'S VIEWS.¹

I.

I LIVE in Paris—not 'in style,'
But on a rusty little isle
Where all is quiet, save the scream
Of steamers blowing off their steam;
Or when a raft may chance to pass,
Announced by brayings of an ass;
Or when, if favoured by the weather,
The islanders all flock together
And on a Sunday dance a jig,
Or grease and try to catch a pig;
Where anglers fish from morn till night
Encouraged by a single bite;
Where dogs are shaved in little boats;
Where babies get their milk from goats
(That freshly yield from door to door
The drink of Baby Jove of yore);
And where I rent upon a *quai*
A garret for a franc a day.

II.

I am a stranger: that is why
The price they charge me is so high:
My native neighbours shrewdly laugh,
And say I pay too much by half.

III.

It is the City's oldest part,
Its very core, its very heart,
And stands sequestered and alone,
And is a village of its own—
That seems removed a thousand miles
From wicked Paris and its wiles.

IV.

A narrow strip of running water
Divides me from the Latin Quarter—
Where Babel is at times let loose,
And frisky students play the deuce,
(Though *my* secluded situation
Has kept me out of such temptation.)

¹ The above 'skit' was read to 'The Creepmouse Club,' Paris, August, 1893.

V.

My palace fronts the waterside
And wears a look of shabby pride,
And feels as lofty as it felt
When there its ducal owner dwelt:
For there, with snuff-box and peruke,
Abode a high and mighty duke,
Who in his splendour raved and swore
(A hundred years ago or more)
At democrats and all the clan
Of clamourers for the Rights of Man!

How *would* he swear—how *would* he rave
Could he come hither from his grave
To find his latest legatee
A howling democrat like me!

VI.

The stony stairs, the oaken floors,
The griffins on the great hall-doors
Remain to show the high gentility
Of that decayed and old nobility:
—But dukes, I hope, have had their day,
And as a democrat I say,
I would there reigned—in all the Earth—
The one Nobility of Worth!

VII.

Five stories up above mankind
I, with my elevated mind,
Can (like a very duke) look down
On all the gentry of the town.

VIII.

Here, lodging halfway up the sky,
We dwell together, She and I—
My pretty Angelique, my pet,
My little, wanton, young grisette.

One night, amid the rain and sleet,
I took her thither from the street:
At morn, the storm had passed away
Yet Angelique desired to stay.

How could I slam my garret-door
And shut her out for evermore?
For I am weak, I will confess,
At sight of beauty in distress.

O scandal, hush, and chide me not!
For Angelique, my young cocotte,
Although she shares my garret-mat,
Is nothing but a Maltese cat.

IX.

Or not a cat, but just a kit:
And oft, to please the little chit,
'O Angelique,' I say, 'You tread
The stairways of the mighty dead:
How do you like this grand old place—
This rookery of a royal race?'

As plainly as a cat can speak,
'O beggar-bard,' says Angelique,
'Our garret is divinely nice,
For it abounds in rats and mice.'

X.

Then as she dips her nose of pink
Into a bottle of my ink,
I answer, 'O you arrant witch,
You think me poor, but I am rich:

'By charter of a window-pane
I own all Paris and the Seine!
For all the spires that I can see,
And all the streets, belong to me!

'Nor on the stream can come or go
A tug-boat with a barge in tow,
Except to haul it where my eyes
Can make a capture of the prize.

'A hundred thousand casks of wine
Along the river-marge are mine,
Which I with any friend will share
Who climbs my castle-in-the-air.

'I own a fleet of floating-arks,
Where women wash the City's sarks,
And where with elbows white as snow
They all stand rinsing in a row.

'I own (Oh tell it not in Gath!)
A ladies' public swimming-bath,
Down into which I cannot see,
But Fancy paints the sight for me!

'I own a *quai* a mile in length,
All masonry of solid strength;
Yet once a week the solid stone
All changes into flowers full blown!

'I own each pair of dripping oars
That flash between the stony shores:
I own each torch and lantern light
Of all regattas in the night.

'I own that pretty, tiny tot,
James Gordon Bennett's baby-yacht:
And also (when I have the *sous*)
I own the *Herald*, with the news.

'I own the Pantheon's noble dome,
Owned lately by the Pope of Rome
(Who now would like to get it back):

'I own the stately Tour Saint Jacques,
The finest tower in all the town!
[What fool proposed to tear it down?]

'I own a nearer, dearer fane,
For just outside my window-pane
My neighbour Notre Dame looks in
With every gargoyle all agrin!

And oft I borrow their grimace,
And mock, as they, and make a face,
And cast my most religious jeer
On all this sublunary sphere.'

XI.

I also say to Angelique,
'You are so fat, you are so sleek,
That this must be a healthy place;
And so you here shall romp and race
Till all our little purse be spent,
And I no more can pay the rent:

'To pay the rent is growing hard,
For I, like many a better bard,
Now write my epopees so well
That not a copy can I sell.'

XII.

She heeds me not, the little minx!
For only of herself she thinks,

And better loves her only gown
Than all the sights of all the Town!

And like my cat, one coat alone
Is all that *I* myself now own:
And even this (my Sunday best)
Has *no* red ribbon on the breast:

Yet since this gewgaw I descry
On many a greater fool than I,
It is a badge I never covet,
But in my garret am above it.

XIII.

O Paris, pompous as thou art
With pinnacle and spire and mart,
My modest isle, from coast to coast,
Has not a monument to boast.

For here no mighty pile was built
With lofty dome of glittering gilt,
Nor awful crypt of shining gloom
Empurpling an Imperial Tomb.

Here is no proud triumphal arc,
No obelisk, no public park,
No fount to cool the summer's heat,
No statue standing in the street,
No granite fortress grey and grim,
No round-tower on the river's rim,
No market-house, no long arcade,
No double-pillared colonnade,
No avenues of tempting shops,
(With other tempters for the fops,)
No gilded hell, no devil's den,
Nor even anywhere an N.

XIV.

The isle, within its civic pale,
Has just a chapel and a jail;
From both of which, for many a day,
The honest folk have kept away.

XV.

And since the isle is bare of sights,
Save only from its garret-heights,
No gangs of gawks from foreign lands
Gape here with guide-books in their hands.

XVI.

Yet all the place, from shore to shore,
Is reeking with historic lore :

Here Julius Caesar came in flight
From being beaten in a fight ;
Yet gave a different version—very !—
In writing up his Commentary ;
(For in his bragging book, you know,
He always overthrew his foe.)

Here in this once umbrageous isle
Merlin and Vivian dwelt awhile ;
And here the King of France one day
Allured Diana's self astray.

Here came the holy Genevieve
And told the haughty Huns to leave :
And *when*, since then, was known or sung
Such triumph of a woman's tongue ?

Here came Saint Denny, head in hand,
And though he never deigned to land,
He flung his sacred skull ashore,
And now the skull has grown to four.

Here Danté, when a college-youth
(Ere Beatrice was born forsooth),
First loved a lass of lesser note,
Who kept the island's ferry-boat.

Here, underneath the screening trees,
Walked Abelard with Hèloise ;
And here too *I* have walked with . . . well . . .
But no . . . I never kiss and tell.

XVII.

Saint Louis, he whose noble fame
Gave to my little isle its name,
Came hither oft at break of day
To lay aside his crown and pray.

I wonder if the Lord still cares
(Or ever did) for human prayers ?
And did He lend His gracious ear
When cruel Catharine sought Him here ?

For here she came in widow's weeds,
And sat and told her blessed beads,
And shed a pious tear or two,
And passed to . . . Saint Bartholomew!

XVIII.

How small the people look below,
As they are walking to and fro!
For men with all their pride of place
Are but a puny, pigmy race;
And though the ant within his hill
(As we are told) is vainer still,
Yet as for me—above the crowd,
And looking down—I might be proud
Save only that, from lack of pelf,
I am Humility itself.

XIX.

I count my bridges—they are seven
(With Heimdal's bridge¹ besides, in Heaven).

They greatly vary in design,
And one of them is wondrous fine²,
With four Zouaves of carven stone,—
Those giant sentries! never known
On any night to fall asleep,
So faithful is the watch they keep!

Another bridge (the city's boast³,
And which a Frenchman loves the most),
Was built of the destroyed Bastile—
A bridge, in crossing which I feel
All tyranny beneath my heel!

I also much admire of course
King Henri Quatre's bridge and horse⁴:
And yet for amplitude of plan,
And nobleness of arch and span,
Few bridges equal, I suppose,
The bridge of Henri's noble nose.

XX.

And where the King, with royal brass,
Still stares at all the dames who pass,
I often go, on idle days,
To rummage round the bookish *quais*.

¹ Heimdal's bridge is the rainbow.

² Pont de la Concorde.

³ Pont de l'Alma.

⁴ Pont Nœuf.

Once, on the parapet of stone,
I found a volume of my own!

—I take it up! I fondly eye it!
I look as if I mean to buy it!
I handle it with tender touch,
And (with an accent), ask 'How much?'

'This book,' replies the bibliopole,
'Is still uncut, the leaves are whole;
For this is English, and they say
That English, Sir, has had its day:
Accept it as a gift!' he said.

Whereat I proudly shook my head.
'Oh no!' quoth I, as in the rack
I fiercely thrust the volume back;
'This author once had quite a vogue,
But then he proved an arrant rogue!
You are a fool, I must avow,
To foist him on the public now.'

XXI.

I take a ramble every day
Along the crowded Élysées;
Yet not to see the newest fashion;
But I have always had a passion
For catching glimpses of the features
Of eager hurrying human creatures!
I love to read with rapid look
That never-failing wonder-book,
The Human Face, miscalled 'divine':
For Man, I think, outranks by far
The greatest gods that were or are,
And bears engraven on his face
The history of a higher race
Than in the high Olympian halls
Made Heaven resound with drunken brawls.

So as my fellow-men go by
I love to look them in the eye,
And in their answering looks behold
Not deities of days of old—
But beings of a better grain:
For mortal men are, in the main,
Not half such thieves and rakes and pimps—
Such devils and such devils' imps—
Such high adepts in every crime
As were the gods of early time.

Or if you answer me and say
That there be better gods to-day,
Then I rejoin and I repeat,
The gods are now in every street;
For if the gods are come agen,
They are the multitude of men;

And though 'the human face divine'
Be seldom beautiful or fine,
But often ugly, I confess,—
Yet still I like it none the less,
And love to read the hope or care,
The mirth or misery, written there.

This book is ever fresh and new—
Nor does it cost a single *sou*.
—But candour prompts me here to add
That when my heart is sick and sad,—
Of all the books I seek to read
For solace in a time of need,
My book of books, to soothe my woes . . .
Is one I keep at John Munroe's.

XXII.

Beneath my window is a lane
Where, every Friday, sun or rain,
A fish-wife with her cart comes by
And halts and shrieks to me on high;
And so, to gratify the wish
Of Angelique (who dotes on fish,
And who is orthodox, I hope),
I drop a basket by a rope.

My fish-wife is a jolly jade
Who rants at the decline of trade,
And scolds and says the times are bad,—
The worst the island ever had;

And yet she proves by girth and band
The growing fatness of the land:
She lives so well, and is so stout,
That she has twinges of the gout,—

With husbands three beneath the ground,
And two above, but none around:
And yet the jade is not content,
But tipples till her coin is spent,
And shouts that things have gone to wrack,
And bawls to have the Empire back.

XXIII.

My wattled basket comes and goes
And brings me up my *Figaros*,
My *Matins* and my *Moniteurs*,
Until my little kitten purrs
And says that, judging by their spats,
The journalists behave like cats:
A censure which I think is true,
And yet (to render them their due)
These gentleman, however cruel,
Are harmless when they fight a duel.

XXIV.

One day I asked of Angelique,
'What would you say, if you could speak?
For oft you mumble like a man;
So try to tell me, if you can,
What most you wish for in the world?'
Whereat her little tail she curled,
And round and round she danced and purred,
And answered, 'A canary-bird.'

XXV.

Quoth I, 'Why do you chase your tail
So vainly and without avail?
For though you follow it so fast
You never catch it at the last.'

Quoth she, 'Why do you hunt a rhyme
From early dawn till dinner-time,
And chase through half the blessed day
A thought that always flits away?'

XXVI.

—I like (and so the sculptors do)
The marble horses of Coustou
(Though peppered here and there in spots
With ugly Prussian rifle-shots).

I like the monumental maiden
Whose mighty lap is always laden
With wagon-loads of flowers and grass
To deck the memory of Alsace,
(And make a Frenchman swear in vain
At never getting back Lorraine.)

I like the City that is dight
The World's Metropolis of Light :
I like its various halls of knowledge,
The University, the College,
But oh ! I like the best of all—
In fact I *love*—the Students' Ball.

I go there always, once a week :
But not, of course, with Angelique :
I leave her with her mice and rats,
And go and dance with other cats.

XXVII.

I do not say that such a plan
Meets the religious wants of man ;
But nowadays I seldom find
A man of a religious mind :
I used to think I knew of *one*,
And *I* was *he* : but, O my Muse,
My beautiful and early views—
As full of moonshine as the moon,
And glowing as the bug of June—
Are muddled now, and full of doubt,
And this is how it came about :

One summer night my lamp was lit,
To which the moths began to flit :
I winced to see the greedy flame
Devour each pretty midge that came :
At last, to rid me of the sight,
I wrathfully blew out the light :
And then I railed, presumptuous man
At cruel nature's heartless plan,
Till in the darkness where I sat
I felt upon my brow a gnat !
I slapped my philosophic head
And smote the sweet musician dead !
It was, I grant, a brutal blow
And laid my lofty logic low.

So now I think that soon or late,
With all who muse and meditate,
Whether on moths that burn their wings,
Or on the general frame of things,
Think as we will, our final thought,
Self-contradicted, comes to nought.

XXVIII.

Since hopes are slow in coming true,
My dearest wishes are but two:
And first that, with its trials past,
The French Republic is to last:
And next, that there will dawn a day
When carts will come and cart away
The heap of garbage on my *quai*.

XXIX.

O best of countries! Darling shore,
Which I perhaps may see no more,
I would that I to-day were there,
Agog in the Chicago Fair¹!
Sweet Native Land! I love thee still
In spite of the McKinley bill.

XXX.

But now, an exile, as I sit
With no companion save my kit,—
My window, like a wizard's glass,
Foreshows what is to come to pass.

Oh, be the fancy not in vain!
For I discover through the pane,
From East to West, from North to South,
Across the open Cannon's Mouth
The Spider's Web, when War no more
Shall belch its horrid thunder-roar!

I see the Horn of Plenty filled!
I see the teeming acres tilled!
I see the toilers of the land
Each with his guerdon in his hand!
I see the crumbled crown and throne,—
While nowhere round the world is known
That tawdry, despicable thing
Which modern nations call a king!
I see the captive's broken chain!
I see a balm for every pain!

I even see a tender ruth
Upon the very tiger's tooth!
Yea, in my mirror I behold
The coming of an age foretold
Wherein (although I say not when)
The very cockatrice's den

¹ This was written in August, 1893.

Shall be a place where you may stand
And stroke the creature with your hand :
Though, as for me, I don't affirm
That I shall greatly pet the worm.

XXXI.

Alas ! the things that we foresee
Are not the things that are to be !
The Lion lying with the Lamb
Is very pretty, but a sham !
Nor is there yet a Prince of Peace,
For Wars go on and never cease ;
And still the nations groan in pain
In order that their kings may reign ;
And still the world is overawed,
And cowed and crushed by force and fraud ;
For Might is ever with the strong,
And Right is ever in the wrong !

XXXII.

The two great Powers of Good and Ill
Were equal once—are equal still—
And equal evermore shall be :
For Justice vaunts that she is blind,
And, caring little for mankind,
She holds so evenly her scales
That neither Right nor Wrong prevails,
And God is kept upon a level
With His arch-enemy the Devil.

XXXIII.

I often go on sunny days
To Montparnasse and Père-Lachaise,
But not to weep or mourn or sigh :
The dead are happy—so am I.

XXXIV.

And though my garret is too bare
For any but a cat to share,
Yet I shall soon remove from hence
To lodgings of a less expense.

The house to which I am to go
Is yon pavilion, grey and low,
Whose roof just makes a little ridge
Above the level of the bridge.

It is the Morgue, and in it lies,
Each day, the last new wretch that dies :

And on its hospitable shelf
I shall at last be laid myself.

O gentle neighbours, after that,
Be kind to Angelique, my cat ;
Nor drive her forth upon the town,
Nor fling her in the Seine to drown !

And where I once was wont to dwell,
Nail on the wall a slab to tell
That there, the island's modest pride,
Its humble poet, lived and died.

A VENTURESOME VISITOR.

IN THE RUE DE LA POMPE.

(From the Chinese.)

I.

O HONEY-BEE, why hast thou come
To wander in these Paris streets ?
Their noise will drown thy tiny hum,—
And they are bare of sweets.

II.

So hie thee back to Passy Park,
From which, O truant, thou hast strayed !
The night will soon be growing dark,—
And thou wilt be afraid.

III.

Moreover, beetles now are out,—
With other bugs of low degree ;
And they would gladly learn, no doubt,
That thou hast quit thy tree.

IV.

For they are thieves ; and all the hoard
Of honied treasure which, with zeal,
Thou all the summer long hast stored,—
They would delight to steal.

V.

Go back to Passy,—to the limb
Wherein thou hast thy rural hive !
Go back before the night is dim,—
Whilst yet thou art alive.

VI.

For if upon these paving-stones
 Thy loitering feet too long shall lag,
 Some cab will come and crush thy bones,
 And burst thy honey-bag.

VII.

Nor is this all; for, odd to say,
 It is an ordnance of the town
 That strangers in the street must pay
 For being trampled down!

VIII.

'*To be run over*' (so it saith)
 '*Is an offence of such a kind*
That in addition to your death
You also shall be fined!'¹

HONG WONG PONG,
 Seventh Secretary.

CHINESE EMBASSY, *Ville-Lumière*,
Place Victor Hugo.

A COLLOQUY IN THE CLOUDS.

I.

'THOU art a God, and so am I,'
 (The mighty Thor to Odin said:)
 'We jointly rule the Earth and Sky:
 We shall be missed when we are dead:
 How strange that we are doomed to die!
 What is the reason why?'

II.

Quoth Odin, 'We were Gods of yore;
 But thou, the Thunder,—I, the Sun,—
 With our united fire and roar,—
 Are nothing now to Krupp's new gun—
 Which I am told will have a bore
 Of half a mile or more!'

¹ It is astonishing to Chinamen and other foreigners in Paris to learn that the cabs and horses have the legal right of way, and that unlucky pedestrians who are knocked down by a wagon-wheel, or by a horse's hoof, are thereby rendered liable to arrest for misdemeanour, and to payment of a fine for obstructing the public road!

CARNOT¹.

I.

O WEEPING people, now at last his worth
Shines forth with glory in your sudden grief,
Till ye behold in him so grand a chief
That just his fall hath shaken all the Earth!

II.

Be proud! be proud! And while your heads are bowed,
Thank the high Heavens that such a man as he—
As spotless as mortality can be!—
Hath now his praise ungrudgingly allowed.

III.

Heap up the Persian roses on his pall!
Bring every bud of Gulistán to-day!
Bring myrtle, ivy, and immortal bay!
Bring *fleur-de-lys*—the fittest flower of all!

IV.

Yea, *fleur-de-lys*,—the old Imperial Flower!
To tell the world how *he*, without a throne,—
Ruling in Freedom's simple name alone,—
Out-liliated Kings!—for Purity is Power!

V.

Give him his title!—Purest of the Pure!—
Who, with a Nation's wealth at his command,
Kept not a *sou* in his unsullied hand,
But spent his treasure on the sick and poor!

VI.

O sad Tri-Colour, wrapt in crape to-day,
A sister flag, three-hued, and draped like thine,
Hath paid such honours *twice*,—across the brine,—
To Chieftains martyred in the self-same way.

VII.

What mean these mysteries? What do they foretell?
Are they the omens of a Wrath to Come?
Hush! God is speaking! Let the Earth be dumb!
Is it not said, 'He doeth all things well'?

PARIS, Monday, June 25, 1894.

¹ These lines appeared in the Paris edition of the *New York Herald* just after the assassination.

THE TOMB AT TÜBINGEN.

(The dates on the hatchment are A. D. 1445-1496.)

I.

THERE is at Tübingen a tomb
From which, with sudden start,—
Not waiting for the Trump of Doom,—
There shall arise, with cap and plume,
The great Duke Eberhart.

II.

What can the mighty errand be
That calls him from his clay?
'He comes in answer to our plea,
To set the groaning people free!'
—Thus do the peasants say.—

III.

'He ruled us once,—he ruled us long,—
He made us happy *then* ;—
For he was gentle, yet was strong ;—
And *now*, since things are going wrong,
We beg him back agen!'

IV.

Thus do they cry!—and they declare
That as their plea is just,
And as the Country needs his care,
The Duke will waken at their prayer!—
And come he will and must!

V.

The Duke,—when he shall come once more
(Whose coming is at hand!)—
Will wear the same Red Beard he wore,
Which his battalions called of yore
The Banner of the Land.

VI.

The wind would blow it like a flame!—
And men in battle-line
Saluted it with loud acclaim,
And followed it to fields of fame,
And conquered by the sign!

VII.

They conquered on the Alpine heights
And in the Neckar's vale;—
And Swabians now, on winter nights,
Rehearse those fierce and bloody fights
In many a fireside tale.

VIII.

And when they end their tales they say
That while the Duke grew old
No hair of all his beard grew grey,—
Nor doth it in his tomb decay,
Nor whiten with his mould:

IX.

But as he lies and takes his rest,
Clad in his mail complete,
His beard still blazes down his breast
And wraps his knees (together prest)
And reaches to his feet.

X.

His body moulders (as it must)—
And yet his spirit pure
Still sweetens (so they say) the dust
Of one revered by all the just,—
Beloved by all the poor.

XI.

So round his tomb a toiling race,—
For half a thousand years,—
Have prayed to Heaven to grant them grace
To be alive,—to see his face
When he agen appears!

XII.

Astir before the final day
That wakes the other dead,
The Duke shall walk the King's highway,
And folk shall see him, and shall say,
'Who comes with beard so red?'

XIII.

The proud shall quake, but by Saint Luke!
The humble shall wax bold,
And cry, 'It is the bearded Duke!—
Who walks the realm to give rebuke
To tyrants as of old!'

XIV.

It also is a tale they tell
That ere his tomb was hewn
He bade the builders build it well,
Lest he should burst the narrow cell
And rise a day too soon!

XV.

His rising will not be too soon!—
However soon it be!—
For is there not a written rune
That he shall bring the land a boon,
And set the people free?

XVI.

The people must be freed agen
As they were freed of yore,
For now, O Fatherland, as then,
Thou hearest the complaints of men
Whose Freedom is no more!

XVII.

For is it Freedom if, as now,
In every smiling field,
The brawny peasant scarce knows how
To hold the handle of a plough,
But only sword and shield?

XVIII.

O say, is Freedom just begun
Or now already past,—
When every rising of the sun
Sees moulded some new murderous gun,
Each deadlier than the last?

XIX.

Is Freedom born of hellish hate?—
A birth of sin and crime?—
Do freemen best fulfil their fate,
In waging wars that decimate
By millions at a time?

XX.

O Cross of Calvary, Thou art shamed,
And under curse and ban!—
Is not Thy honour touched and maimed
By every missile that is aimed
Against the heart of man?

XXI.

Awake, O slumbering Duke, awake!
 For now the people weep!—
 The people groan!—the people ache!—
 The people's hearts begin to break!—
 How canst thou longer sleep?

XXII.

—And when he wakes, O blessed day!
 What will the Duke demand?
 '*Sheathe ye the sword!*' the Duke will say,
 'And let the peasant go his way
 To plow and sow his land!—

XXIII.

'*Sheathe ye the sword!* Why dally ye?
 Sheathe it, and let it rust!
 Look, mine has rusted, as ye see!
 The sword is but a tyrant's plea,
 And not a people's trust!—

XXIV.

'*Sheathe ye your million swords!*—and then
 Let all your spindles hum,—
 Till Thrift shall gladden busy men,
 And Plenty's Horn be filled agen!
 —And this is why I come!'

XXV.

And hark! the watchers at his urn
 Now say with bated breath
 That he for whom they wait and yearn
 Begins at last to stir and turn
 And waken out of death!

XXVI.

By many a token wild and weird
 His rising is at hand!—
 If not in flesh, with burning beard,
 Yet as a mighty spirit, feared
 By tyrants in the land!

XXVII.

Fling wide, O Tomb, thy marble door!
 Deliver up thy clay!
 Let not thy sleeper slumber more,—
 For oh the suffering Land is sore!—
 Wake him To-day, To-Day!¹

¹ The legendary foundation for this ballad is mentioned in a footnote at page 231.

THE SHIP OF PEARL.

TO THE MEMORY OF OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

(1809-1894.)

O CHAMBERED Nautilus, no sunny sea,
 However far or foreign, hath to-day
 Found thee untroubled on thy halcyon way!
 Thou hast divined the tidings!—Dead is he,
 Thy Laureate;—he who not in any key
 Sang any carol, whether grave or gay,
 Sonnet, or epigram, or roundelay,—
 More noble than the song he sang to thee!
 How wilt thou, then, reward him as his due?
 O tiny argosy, keep thou henceforth
 Thy gauzy sail for evermore unfurled—
 Catch every zephyr—steer to oceans new—
 And waft from East to West, from South to North,
 Thy Poet's name in sunshine round the world!¹

A WARNING FROM THE UNDERWORLD.

AN OLD FABLE WITH A NEW MORAL.

ACCORDING to Aesop, there was once a goose that laid for her greedy owner a golden egg every day; but this daily tribute by the faithful bird did not content the ignorant Carl; who, being but a clotpoll, knew no reason why his goose should not deliver to him her whole season's eggs in advance, all at the same time; and so he seized her, killed her, carved her, probed her, and expected to discover uncounted eggs inside of her! And hereby is taught (writes the fabulist) how crazy are the dreams of an avaricious mind.

SO runs the Fable, old and stale!
 Now for the Sequel of the Tale:

Down in the Vale of Asphodel
 Where doleful ghosts are doomed to dwell
 (Not merely of mankind alone,
 But of all other creatures known),
 This Goose—immortal, white, and fat—
 Waddled to where her Murderer sat.

¹ The above sonnet appeared in the *Paris Herald* on the day of Dr. Holmes's funeral in Boston (Oct. 10, 1894), and alludes, of course, to his celebrated lyric, entitled 'The Chambered Nautilus.'

This Man—a new arrival there,
Fresh from the bright and upper air—
Stared at the fowl, and in affright
Cried out (as well indeed he might)
'How strange that I agen should meet you!
Shoo! quit me! vanish! I entreat you!'

'O no!' the feathered thing replied,
'It was through *you*, sir, that I died:
You caught me—tore apart my legs—
And searched me for my golden eggs:
I have been waiting for you long—
To curse you for your deed of wrong!
I now am lucky to have found
That you at last are under ground:
And I shall make this region ring
With charges which I mean to bring:
For many a knave (the Talmud saith)
Is punished not till after death.'

The murderer answered in a huff,
'Was not my punishment enough?
Did I not lose (as people say)
A golden egg—one for each day—
Or thirty dozen eggs a year?—
And that's a fortune!—eggs are dear.'

Then with a fluttering in her breast
In memory of her former nest,
The goose exclaimed, 'You renegade!
And did the eggs I *might* have laid
(Yet *could* not!) did they thus arise
By dozens to your gloating eyes,
And vex you with a miser's greed?—
This was a punishment indeed!
It served you right! For O, you dunce,
By coveting too much at once,—
You lost your only chance by which
A stupid peasant could grow rich.'

'Ah, yes! I lost not merely gold,'
Quoth he, 'but pleasures manifold:
I might have kept a horse and carriage,—
I might have made a stylish marriage,—
I might (with proper thrift and care)
Have been an alderman or mayor,—
I might have gained (had I been wise)
Whatever honour money buys;—

Instead of dragging out my days
A laughing-stock to people's gaze!—
For only think of all the shame
That now attaches to my name!—
How I am proverbed up and down!—
And jeered in every market town!—
And styled by jesters in their mirth
The one chief idiot of the earth!
Indeed, I was a stupid loon—
And all for killing you too soon!'

'Hush!' cried the fowl—whetting her nib :
'A guilty tongue is always glib!
You wickedly pervert the truth :
You are a criminal, forsooth :
Your crime was murder with intent,—
And all such reprobates are sent
(Or all, I mean, save only *you*)
Straight to the gallows, as their due;—
But *you*, O silly churl, went free,—
While all the suffering was for *me*!'

'Tut, tut!' he answered, 'how you talk!
It was a twist—and then a squawk—
And in a minute all was over!—
While here, in this elysian clover,
Where now you fatten,—I maintain,
Your death was your eternal gain!
So if my crime be rightly viewed,
You owe me endless gratitude.'

The goose, with gaping bill, replied,
'A year has passed, Sir, since I died :
I have been longer here than you :
My death I now have ceased to rue,—
Especially as fate has willed
That geese must soon or late be killed :
But I have reasons for complaint—
Such reasons as would rile a Saint :
For since, by Nature's noble plan,
A goose is different from a man,
And modelled in a finer mould
(Or else her eggs would not be gold)
You callous men are not aware
What sorrows geese are doomed to bear.'

'Then, Madame, O proclaim,' quoth he,
'What your immortal griefs may be!'

Poised on her pallid yellow legs,
 She said, 'I feel *post-mortem* eggs!—
 Not just the single egg I died for,
 But all the dozens which you sighed for—
 And which I would have laid in time
 Save for your rash and blundering crime!
 They each and all are *in* me yet,
 And make me itch—and fume—and fret!
 I long to lay them, but oh no!—
 They must remain in embryo!
 They lie unlaidd,—abortive things,—
 In limbo,—wedged between my wings,—
 Pressing my wish-bone with a strain
 Until I tingle with the pain:
 A goose's eggs are big, you know,—
 And that is why I suffer so:
 They crowd the space which God assigned them,
 And yet of course you failed to find them—
 Because, O most egregious lout,
 You opened me to take them out!
 But oh that you had spied them there,
 And snatched them thence!—for now (I swear)
 They swell me till I feel accurst,
 And till I fear that I shall burst!
 There is no pang in all perdition
 Like torture from suppressed ambition!
 Why am I tempted to reveal it?
 Because a goose alone can feel it!
 But you, a man, must lack the mind
 For anguish of so high a kind!
 And could I *hang* you, sir, I would!—
 (Though hanging would be far too good).'

Quoth he, 'O cackler, what a fuss!
Who but a goose would gabble thus?
 Be silent, give your tongue a pause—
 Your cackle is without a cause:
 What louder clack could you have made
 If all your eggs had just been laid?
 I know you, Madame, from of old—
 And you have always been a scold!
 —And would I were allowed once more
 To *choke* you as I did before!'

The goose, then bulging out her crop
 (To show contempt), stept with a hop—
 Thrice strutting round him (to inspire
 A horror in him of her ire,)

Unsheathing to an awkward length
 Her second-joints (to brace her strength),—
 Then stopt, and stood with head on high,
 And gave her murderer this reply:

'O wringer of my neck, I vow
 To be revenged! I well know how!
 For every creature born of God,
 However humble, yet when trod,
 Will turn and do the proper thing:
 That is to say, a worm will sting,—
 A cur will bite,—an ass will kick:
 While as for *me*, I know a trick
 Worth all of theirs, and it is this:
 I have no equal at a *hiss*!
 Now on the day you wrenched my head,
 I to myself (while flopping) said,
 "O monster, we agen shall meet,
 And my revenge shall then be sweet!
 For only let my neck get well,
 And all the Vale of Asphodel
 Shall see me follow you around,
 And hear me hiss you with a sound
 Such as in Hadés not a snake
 Would be permitted once to make,
 But *I* will make it all the while,—
 Till every solemn ghost shall smile,
 And till the mocking world below
 (Like that above) shall cry, Oho!
 The very wisest are obtuse,—
 But oh the gawk who killed the goose
 That laid for him an egg of gold,
 Is proved a fool a hundredfold,
 And is the booby whom we call
 The one immortal dunce of all!"'

Thus spake the goose. He thought her speech
 Had ended with her final screech—
 But then, in language worse than words,
 This most abusive bird of birds
 Thrust out a tongue which gods might fear,
 And *hissed* him for all Hell to hear!

The man, with a remorseful sigh,
 Uprose, and making no reply,
 Went stalking off as spectres do
 Who slink and disappear from view.

But not in all that Meadow wide
 Found he a haunt wherein to hide!—
 For let him stray to hill or hollow,
 The waddling goose would always follow,
 And deafen him with scorn and scoff—
 Nor, could he ever drive her off.

So now (with but himself to thank!)
 He often sits on Lethé's bank
 (Where first she found him, and where still
 He cringes at her darting bill)—
 He sits and sits, and muses long,
 And meditates on right and wrong,
 And says, 'The world above should know
 How I am pestered here below!
 Ye mortals, though I quite agree
 With Aesop's moral drawn from *me*,—
 (That I was but a brainless kern)
 Yet since a ghost may live and learn,—
 And since my punishment is sore,—
 I wish to add one moral more:
 Which you may find of worldly use:
 '*Haec docet*: If you have a goose,
 And if she has an egg to lay,
 Don't wring her neck, but wisely say
 (And emphasize it while you say it)
 "Go in the Devil's name and lay it!"'

THE HERO OF PEACE.

THIS sonnet refers to the Sculptor Falguière's silver image which the French Press commissioned him to send from Paris to St. Petersburg for the funeral of Alexander III of Russia. The statuette represents a recording Angel winging her way over the globe,—touching it with one foot, while the other is in the air. Bent round the flying figure—at a wide and free distance from it—is a noble framework in the form of a symbolic wreath, consisting of oak-leaves, intertwined with an olive-branch. The oak is heroism; the olive, peace. The design is thus commemorative of a sovereign whose reign was rendered heroic without a war, and who died amid the eulogiums of the Press as the Pacificator of Europe.

WHY is the half of Europe under arms?
 Not *his* the brutal fault!—for well and long
 Toiled he for Peace,—and, hating wrong,
 Said to his peasants, 'Quiet your alarms!
 The trade of murder has for me no charms!
 Why should I band ye as an armed throng?
 Not War but Peace shall make my Empire strong!
 Dwell in your cottages, and till your farms!'

Thus spake the mightiest monarch on the Earth,—
Then died,—and left the lesser kings behind
To sow their little realms with dragons' teeth!

Not all their blood-stained laurels will be worth
His solitary, precious, hallowed wreath!—
The Oak-leaf and the Olive-branch combined!

A LETTER FROM LUCIFER.

(On his favourite maxim, 'CHERCHEZ LA FEMME!' with historical illustrations.)

I.

ONE day last autumn, in a hollow tree,
A scroll of parchment, written in Chaldee,
Was found by chance
At Arles in France.

II.

It was no ancient record, green with mould,
But fresh and recent,—crackling when unrolled
(As parchments do
When crisp and new).

III.

It smelt of brimstone; and the Author's name
(A precious autograph!) was signed in flame,
The smoke of which
Was blue with pitch.

IV.

'I Satan, or the Devil,' said the writer,
'Will here jot down, in phosphorus and nitre,
Some secrets known
To me alone:

V.

'First, I am innocent of all the crimes
For which my character—from early times—
Has borne (God wot!)
Too many a blot.

VI.

'So now, with modesty, and not with shame,
I blush to lay the harsh yet proper blame
For people's wrongs
Where it belongs.

VII.

'Does it belong to *me*? Not so, I swear!
Nor will I brand the Pope—whom I would spare!
Nor shall I smirch
The Holy Church!

VIII.

'I were a dastard if, for private ends,
I thus could stab my very oldest friends
(For whom I pray
Both night and day).

IX.

'The real offender is not far to seek!
Her name is Woman!—who is called the Weak,
And yet she rules
A World of Fools!

X.

'Her rise to power is what I wish to show:
So print my letter in *The Figaro*—
(Where now and then
I flaunt my pen).

XI.

'I watched the Garden; I saw all that passed;
I was familiar there from first to last;
And, if you please,
The facts are these:

XII.

'The Hebrew tale of the Forbidden Fruit—
(Which Moses wrote to blacken my repute)—
Is mere aspersion,
. . . Please read my version.

XIII.

'I marvel how a mortal can believe
That ever it was *I* who tempted Eve—
For it was *she*
Who tempted *me*.

XIV.

'My present narrative of what occurred
Is more authentic than you yet have heard,
And antedates
What Moses states.

XV.

'The Serpent Lilith—(Adam's former wife)—
Had scarlet spots; whereby her married life
Was doomed, of course,
To a divorce.

XVI.

'Then Adam, pointing to his wifeless bower,
And smiling (for it was a happy hour)—
Devoutly swore
To wed no more.

XVII.

'But hardly had he put the Snake away,
When of a sudden—beautiful as day!—
Eve, skipping by,
Dazzled his eye.

XVIII.

'She just had sprung to life, that very morn!—
Full-grown at once!—not needing to be born!—
Too bright for birth
On this dim Earth.

XIX.

'I too had sprung—like *her*—from Heaven above!
So, with a passion of celestial love,
"O maid divine,"
I cried, "be mine!"

XX.

'All of a tingle at a hope so blest
I was about to clasp her to my breast—
When off she ran,
Chased by the man!

XXI.

'You know I limp!—I tried in vain to follow
(For men, in chasing women, beat me hollow).
I stopt, amazed,
And stood and gazed.

XXII.

'At first I thought, as Adam caught and kissed her,
That *he* was just her brother,—*she*, his sister!—
But when I took
A second look—

XXIII.

'The Sky seemed falling!—and the Earth looked black!—
Chaos had come agen!—I turned my back!
—Revenge is sweet!
So in the heat

XXIV.

'Of my all-jealous rage, I swore an oath
To use my subtlest wit to punish both!
Nor was I slow!
Grass did not grow

XXV.

'Beneath my Cloven Foot!—for my device
Was planned and executed in a trice!
All Hadés laughed
Whilst I, with craft,

XXVI.

'Imposed a penalty so keen and clever,
That the sweet torture of it stings for ever!
Do not mistake
The boast I make:

XXVII.

'I speak not of my Cauldron down below,
Nor of my Pitchfork, nor of wails of woe,
Nor of the squirm
Of any Worm:

XXVIII.

'I speak of Woman—how I planned a plan
Whereby not *I* should "PLAY THE DEUCE" with Man,
But *she* should do it,
And make him rue it.

XXIX.

'So Woman plays the deuce with Man, I say—
Not merely in her soft and lovesick way—
(Pricking his heart
With Cupid's dart)—

XXX.

' But on a grander scale—with Sceptre, Throne,
And Armies—all as puppets of her own,
That fight and kill
To work her will.

XXXI.

' For instance, God, the Angels, and the Saints
Are always warning me (with weak complaints)
How they abhor
A World at War.

XXXII.

' But though the Powers Celestial all are bent
On Peace and Concord, yet I still foment—
Now as of yore—
Wars evermore!

XXXIII.

' Is it not plain that I alone—unaided—
Could never get a happy land invaded,
Nor overwhelm
A prosperous realm?

XXXIV.

' All History teaches, as its warlike moral,
That Woman is the picker of the quarrel!
She—the fair sinner!—
Is the beginner.

XXXV.

' She will deny it,—for she hardly knows
How she has fanned a spark until it glows!
Her conflagrations
Then ruin Nations!

XXXVI.

' There never was—there never more will be—
So deft a kindler of a fire as she!
No Imp of Hell
Does it so well!

XXXVII.

' And therefore, when I wish to burn a town
To singe a kingdom, or to scorch a crown
I light the brand
With Woman's hand.

XXXVIII.

'This was the ruse I ventured to employ
To rouse the Greeks to fury against Troy!
Did it succeed?
It did indeed!—

XXXIX.

'No thanks to *me*!—for *I*, with all my guile,
Could not have fired them save with Helen's smile!
Then, what a fall
Had tower and wall!

XL.

'So too, the glory of the world grew dim
In later time, when just a woman's whim—
A wanton's frown—
Shook Egypt down;

XLI.

'For when Marc Antony, with his conquering fleet,
Fled in a craze from victory to defeat,—
Who bade him fly?
It was not *I*.

XLII.

'It took the witchcraft of a wily girl
To daze a warrior, and to melt a pearl!
—Keen, I admit,
Is Woman's wit!—

XLIII.

'Thrice keener than my own! So I depend—
Not on myself but *her*—to gain my end:
I somehow lack
The female knack!

XLIV.

'But Woman—as I gratefully confess—
Supplies my want of cunning and finesse:
Her *savoir faire*
Is my despair.

XLV.

'So when she honours me with her assistance
I, not to hinder her, hop to a distance
And stand aloof
And hide my Hoof.

XLVI.

'I am a Churchman—(pardon the suggestion!)—
And I have solved a theologic question :
What origin
Has mortal sin ?

XLVII.

'The Source of Evil is in Hell no more :
It is on Earth—and traced to Woman's door !
The guilt (in fine)
Is *hers*, not *mine*.

XLVIII.

'*Who* foiled King Arthur and his Table Round,
And kept the Holy Grail from being found ?
Not I, 'tis clear,
But Guinevere !

XLIX.

'*Who* told Macbeth how Duncan was to die,—
And laid the daggers ready,—and stood by
And felt no shame ?
It was a dame !

L.

'So when I plot a slaughter of mankind
I choose a woman of a cunning mind,—
Courageous—cool—
And born to rule.

LI.

'I give her—not th' Imperial Crown alone—
But all the fatal "Power behind the Throne"—
With the addition
Of blind ambition !

LII.

'Then if her royal face and brow and hair
Should chance to be angelically fair—
Such as I knew
At old St. Cloud—

LIII.

'Ere yet the Palace (as I since have learnt)
Was partly battered down, and partly burnt—
I do not err
When I aver

LIV.

'That the immortal mischief of the charm
Of *one* such Siren far exceeds the harm
That *I* can do
With *all* my crew!

LV.

'Such Beauty more than merely blinds the eyes:
It addles all the wit of all the wise:
It toys and sports
With camps and courts:

LVI.

'It spends the blood and treasure of a state:
It reigns by magic, but it yields to fate:
Its day is brief
And ends in grief.

LVII.

'What then? O then, my sulphurous pen, express
How much I honour "*Beauty in Distress*"!
But, oh! sad task,
I first must ask:

LVIII.

'*Who* coaxed the docile Emperor to his doom
And flattered him to exile and a tomb?
I breathe no blame
Upon her name!

LIX.

'The sorrowing lady has my pious pity!
She lost her lord, her crown, her son, her city!
A heart so sore
Should bleed no more!

LX.

'Whoever *else* may smite her, *I* will spare her!
I never had the help of woman fairer—
To lead the brave
Down to the grave!

LXI.

'Would they have followed *me* instead? oh, nay!
Her white forefinger pointed them the way,—
And her sweet breath,
Cried, "On to Death!"

LXII.

'So, pardon her, Good People, I beseech you!—
And let her beautiful example teach you
How small—I swear!—
Is all the share

LXIII.

'Which *I*, the Devil, have in men's damnation,
Compared with Woman's genius of temptation—
To lure, decoy,
Doom and destroy!

LXIV.

'Of course, not *every* woman is my "*pal*":
I cannot use them all, nor ever shall:
The work I do
Is with a few:

LXV.

'The many are beyond me! Be it so!
I cannot reach them—I must let them go:
Enough remain
With whom I train!

LXVI.

'And so I post this packet in a tree
To say, "O World, instead of blaming *me*,
(Bad as I am)—
CHERCHEZ LA FEMME!"'

LXVII.

So ran the Devil's Letter, duly signed;
But such a libel,—of so lewd a kind!—
Must lack, forsooth,
A word of truth!

DATED, 24th Anniversary of Sedan¹.

¹ As an historical corollary to the above codex, a few notes are here appended:

The Surrender at Sedan took place on September 2, 1870. The Prisoners of War were the Emperor, 39 generals, 230 staff-officers, 2,600 other officers, and 83,000 soldiers. A few months previously, while the cry in Paris was—"On to Berlin!" the Empress Eugénie (who foresaw nothing but a French triumph) was quoted as saying with pride and exultation, during a gay soirée at the Tuilleries, 'My friends, please remember that this is *my* war!'

And her fatal boast is not yet forgotten!

Considered as a dethroned sovereign whose calamities resulted from a war

QUEEN MARY TUDOR'S LAMENT.

(Looking out on the Thames from her Palace-window at Greenwich, alone in her chamber, on a bleak November morning, A. D. 1558, a few days before her death.)

I.

I HAVE not had a wink of sleep,
And now the dawn begins to peep:
I shiver in its chilly ray:
My Sweet, it is a bitter day!—
And *thou* art far away!

II.

The boats, the barges, and the shore
Are death-white,—for the frost is hoar:
And all the wintry sky is grey:
But still more bitter is the day,—
Since thou art far away!

III.

Or what if summer's golden gleam
Lay glittering now on yonder stream?
How could the year have any May?—
For bitter still would be the day,—
If thou wert far away!

of her own fostering, the ex-Empress is the most illustrious living instance of thwarted ambition and ruined hope; but judged from every private point of view—whether as a wife widowed—or as a mother childless—or as a benefactress of the poor—or as a model of dignity in retirement—this imperial mourner is honoured with public sympathy to a degree which no other woman of her time has elicited from the world at large.

—Apropos of the Devil's proper name (if he can claim one) the most shining of his many appellations is Lucifer, or Light-Bearer. The tenth book of *Paradise Lost* speaks

'Of Pandemonium; city and proud seat
Of Lucifer, so by allusion called
Of that bright star to Satan paragoned.'

But though Milton portrays Satan by a hundred different emblems and images;—likening him (for instance) to a meteor, to a griffin, to a leviathan, to the peak of Teneriffe, to a vulture, to a kicking-gun, to a thief in the night, to a wolf in the fold, to a python, to a tiger, to a spot on the sun, and even to a city gentleman taking a walk in the country;—yet the blind poet, with all his fancy, did not foresee that his Satanic hero would one day be a newspaper correspondent!

—The town of Arles boasts a proud antiquity, and was once not only a prosperous rival of Marseilles, but was magnificently styled 'The Rome of France.'

IV.

I have a bud, but will it blow,
Or must it perish in the snow?
The Heavens deny me when I pray!
And now, in this my bitter day,
Thou too art far away!

V.

Some say that if a heart but yearn,
The absent feel it, and return!
Then I will *bring* thee!—by my fay!—
For oh how bitter is the day
When thou art far away!

VI.

What is my sceptre or my crown?
Ye baubles, here I fling ye down!
Love is the one imperial sway!—
Until there comes the bitter day
When love is far away!

VII.

I rule my realm to work thy will!
My people hate me!—for I still,
With axe and faggot, burn and slay!
How then, in my so bitter day,
Art thou so far away?

VIII.

They warn me that my death is near!
I face it more with joy than fear!
Why should I have a wish to stay?
What is my life? A bitter day!—
Thou being far away!

IX.

Here, in the frost-work on the glass,
I write thy name,—and yet, alas!—
(Like *thee*!)—it is as cold as clay!
How bitter dost thou make my day
By lagging far away!

X.

What keeps thee from these arms of mine?
Is it the tempting Spanish wine?
Or is it some Duenna gay?
—Then sevenfold bitter is the day
That lures thee far away!

XI.

O Jealousy, how keen thy dart!
 But he who stings a woman's heart—
 Hath *he* no penalty to pay?
 —Oh, bitter be thy dying day
 For wandering far away!

XII.

But no, I curse thee not!—I cry,
 Come back to me before I die!
 When *thou* commandest, *I* obey!
 Why art thou, on this bitter day
 O truant, far away?

XIII.

What lover quits his lady so?
 Thy heart was never mine, I know.
 Shall it be mine at last? Oh, nay!
 I must abide the bitter day
 That keeps thee far away!

XIV.

Moan, O ye Winds, this winter morn!
 My little Babe will not be born!
 Then come, O Death, without delay!
 Good-bye, O Earth, this bitter day,—
 For *I* go far away!¹

¹ The following passage is from Act v. of Tennyson's historical drama 'Queen Mary':

Enter COUNT DE FERIA (kneels).

Feria. I trust your Grace is well. (*Aside*) How her hand burns!

Mary. I am not well, but it will better me,
 Sir Count, to read the letter which you bring.

Feria. Madam, I bring no letter.

Mary. How! no letter?

Feria. His Highness is so vexed with strange affairs—

Mary. That his own wife is no affair of his!

Feria. Nay, Madam, nay! he sends his veriest love,
 And says, he will come quickly.

Mary. Doth he, indeed?
 You, Sir, do *you* remember what *you* said
 When last you came to England?

Feria. Madam, I brought
 My King's congratulations; it was hoped
 Your Highness was once more in happy state
 To give him an heir male.

Mary. Sir, you said more:
 You said he would come quickly. I had horses
 On all the road from Dover, day and night;
 On all the road from Harwich, night and day;
 But the child came not, and the husband came not:
 And yet, 'he will come quickly!' Thou hast learnt
 Thy lesson, and *I* mine. There is no need

LE JOUR DES MORTS.

(November the Second.)

Une Causerie Esthétique.

THE Tomb of Bizet, the composer of the Opera of *Carmen*, is in the Cemetery of Père-Lachaise, Paris.

It is a comely cube of stone, crowned with a bust of bronze.

Every year, on the 'Day of the Dead' (when flowers are strewn on all the graves), the great musician receives the homage, not only of many wreaths, but of various other demonstrations, in tardy recognition of his genius.

Celebrated as his name now is, all his success came, not during his life, but after his death.

'Do you think that *Carmen* will please Paris?' he was asked, just as the curtain was rising on the night of its first representation—March 3, 1875.

'No,' he replied, '*Carmen* will be, like every other work of mine, a failure!'

It failed.

In fact, *Carmen* was derisively received and angrily condemned at the *Première*.

As a consequence, the sensitive composer was pricked to the heart by the popular rebuke to him which his *chef d'œuvre* provoked in his native city; and he was so cast down and disheartened thereby, that he died exactly three months afterward—to a day—namely, June 3, 1875.

But he was hardly in his grave before the taste of the town took a sudden change; his brilliant masterpiece, instead of being depreciated and hissed, was hailed as a new departure in music; and now—next to Gounod's *Faust*!—Bizet's *Carmen* is the most popular opera known on the stage.

It is a satisfaction to reflect that in New York (if not in Paris) *Carmen* was a shining success from the very first.

The following colloquy is supposed to have taken place at Bizet's monument, on a recent *Jour des Morts*, when an American tribute in the form of a harp or lyre, consisting of variegated flowers, was laid upon the composer's tomb.

—AND this is Père-Lachaise?

—Yes, stranger, join this fête of ours!

For on this day of days

All Paris, every year,—

For Philip so to shame himself agen.

Return,

And tell him that I know he comes no more!

Tell him at last I know his love is dead,

And that I am in state to bring forth death!—

Thou art commissioned to Elizabeth,

And not to me.

Feria Mere compliments and wishes.

But shall I take some message from your Grace?

Mary. Tell her to come and close my dying eyes,

And wear my crown, and dance upon my grave.

Feria. (*Aside*) How her hand burns!

¹ I had this anecdote from the lips of the late Professor Samuel David, the well-known Paris musician, who told it to me at the Café de la Régence, 1893.

Just as the leaves grow sere,—
Comes to this hill-side here
To deck the dead with flowers.

—And whose is this new tomb?

—It is Bizet's.

—Then, O Parisians, heap it high with bloom!
Cover it thick with bays!
Let it be never found
Without some garland crowned!
The immortelle
Becomes it well!
Bring also bergamot,
And myrtle, and forget-me-not!
Cull all the flowers the season sends,
And pile them on this sacred stone!
And look! O ye his friends,
I too, a stranger and unknown,
Bring these few columbines
And pinks and eglantines
As a poor tribute of my own.

—Welcome, O stranger, and *Vive l'Amérique!*
Continuez!
Perhaps you have a further word to speak
Of our Bizet.

—Well, then, ye Frenchmen, since ye have bedecked
(Too tardily, alas!)
The victim of your own neglect,
Now sit ye down upon the grass
(This hallowed grass which *he* is under)
And whisper to his stone,—as to a Sphinx,—
And ask it what it thinks
Of all the gay uproar,—
The shout, the cheer, the clapping of the hands,
And all the glad applause,—too long deferred,—
Now nightly heard,—
That shakes a hundred theatres with thunder,
And which in all the listening lands
Now more and more,
With wild *encore*,
Greets the Toréador?

—Yes, O American, your taunt is just!—
We feel the thrust!
For though at last we shout and cheer,
It is too late for *him* to hear!

Let us admit with shame
How much we are to blame!
We did not prize
Nor recognize
Our great musician while we 'still possessed him!
Yea, verily indeed,
We did him cruel wrong instead,
Till, if the spirit of a man can bleed,
His must have bled!
For we at first, with evil will,
All frowned upon him, scorned him,
Lampooned him, thorned him,
Stung him, bewildered him, distressed him,
And mocked his art,
And said, with howl and hiss,
'We will have none of this!'
And so we drove his music from the stage,—
And broke his heart!
Yet now the Nations of the Earth
Have all acclaimed his worth,
And crowned him, honoured him, and blest him!
Who ever heard the like before?
What a furore!
His drama which we tried to kill
Is now the rage!
It is a masterpiece, no doubt:
One of the brightest of the age,
And yet we bright Parisians,—
With all our tastes! all our traditions!
And all our intuitions!—
Could never find its merit out,
Nor guess the mighty labour it had cost him—
Until we lost him!
So, by Saint Luke,
O stranger, we deserve your best rebuke!
Show us no pity!
We call our city
La Ville de Lumière,
Yet, by the Great Ramchunder!
We here and now
Blush to avow
That we have made a *double* blunder!
—Too fond of martyrs, we have made a *pair!*
—And who are *they?*
—Why, poor Millet,
And, poor Bizet!

—Ye *martyred* them? Can this be true?

—Yes, stranger, we destroyed the *two*!
 For *one* we starved, and *one*
 We put to torture! Neither method new!
 Such deaths we oft have done!—
 And oft are like to do!
 But when we saw that we had slain
 The noble twain,
 We hardly gave them time to die,
 And to grow cold,
 Before we proudly said,
 ‘Since now they both are dead,—
 Victims of ours!—
 Let us melt bronze, and let us mould
 To each his image! Let us set it high!
 And let us crown it once a year with flowers!
 And let us praise these martyrs to the sky!’

—Then, O remorseful Paris, ye may wonder
 If on this mountain, and if in this mound,
 This sleeper, in his sleep profound,
 Can in some mystic way
 Catch some re-echo of the sound
 Of all the mighty plaudits, round on round,
 Which Death and Time and Fate
 Now join to pay
 (Albeit late)
 In homage to the minstrel underground!

—O stranger, tell us, *s’il vous plaît!*

—Well, ye tomb-deckers, I reply:
 What is a mortal turned to clay?
 Does Death, unto these dead of ours, deny
 All knowledge of the Earth wherein they lie?
 What if, to those who die before their day,
 The Giver of All Good
 (To recompense them for a death too soon)
 Should of His bounty mercifully give
 Some far more blessed earthly boon
 Than He bestows on those who live?
 This, if He would,
 Of course He could.

Now God is just!—
 And if He made mankind
 Out of the dust,—

Endowing their mortality with thought,—
He Who thus wrought
May also, of a dead man's dust, re-make
A dead man's brain,
And give it for its second dower
A new and nobler mental power,
Whereby it shall attain
To greater knowledge than it left behind :
Yea, I am half inclined
To fancy that our Ever-loving Lord,
Working a mighty miracle beneath the sward,—
May for the dead's own hallowed sake,—
And as a life's reward,—
Bestow upon a dead man in his grave
A seven-fold wit,
A seven-fold wisdom,
Yea, a seven-fold purified, refined,
Prophetic, and immortal mind !

For surely the Creator would not plan
To keep a soul of life in lesser things,
Yet snatch it from His noblest creature, Man !

Even the moth,—lured by the candle-light,—
Hath immortality upon his wings,—
In runic letters writ.

Our Father Odin gave, in days of old,
Even to gnome and elf,—
To pixie, troll, and fay,
And every sprite
That haunts the graveyard mould,—
The gift of sight
To see at night
As mortals see by day :
And shall Jehovah then from man withhold
Some all-illuming spark
To light him in the dark ?—
Or shall our Maker, from His dearest dead,
In their eternal bed,
Take all their living gifts away,
And banish hence
Each subtle sense,—
Each fine intelligence,—
And turn the chief of creatures to a clod ?

—But, stranger, how can these things be ?

—Well, I will answer! Look at yonder tree!
It is a yew:

God feeds it with the rain and dew:
Now if He makes the yew-tree thrive,
Can He not keep the dead alive?
The turf-clad and untroubled dead, I ween,
Are quite as living as the living green
That garnishes their graveyard sod,
Or as the never-dying moss
That mantles yon immortal Cross!

Doth not the Crucified Himself,
Though He be God,
Yet yearn for human praise?—
For worldly tribute?—yea, for glory?—fame?—
And earthly honour to His Name?

And shall a mortal man who seeks the same,—
Not winning it until, at last,
His life is past,—
Be then forbidden to discern
The homage offered at his urn?

O ye proud mourners, no!
Ye have not hither brought
Your wagon-load of flowers for nought!

Death is not Fate: and how,—to men,—
Can death be *fatal*, then?

Your mouldering minstrel lying here below,—
Whom ye agen entomb
In this new mound of bloom,—
Knows well,—(oh, doubt it not!)—
What friends ye be, who come to-day,
And what ye bring to beautify the spot,—
Making November fairer far than May:

And sure am I
That now beneath this flowery pyramid—
Piled up so high
That half his tomb is hid—
He thanks ye with a heart most tender
For all the honours which ye render!

But, O ye flower-bestrewing throng,
Your garlands last not long!
So though both friend and stranger here lay down,
Each on this cenotaph, a wreath or crown,

Yet is your solemn rite,
Though rich, not ended quite.

—Well, O American, what more?

—Why then let saucy Carmen,—she whose name
Is of itself a song¹,—
And whose wild spirit makes the bull seem tame,—
I say, let the fierce damsel, with her gypsy throng,
And with her bold Toréador,
Her Matador,
Her Picador,
And all her choral train,—
Go singing their resounding score
Until, in echo of their strain,
The listening crowd, applauding, shall ring out
A joyous shout,—
So loud,—so clear,—
That it shall pierce this lily-covered stone,
And reach the Minstrel as he lieth here alone!

And let each night renew
The tireless mimic scene,
All tremulous with the trills of Spain,
And with the jingling tambourine,
And with the loudest breath
Of trump and fife,—
Till,—as the dead man's due,—
A thousand cities give him in his death
The plaudits which his own² begrudged him in his life!

And finally, good people, I avow
(For so I must!)
That if this bust
Which crowns his dust
Could open its bronze lips and speak,
Those lips would say,
(As well they may!)
That even as at first, so also now,—
Upon this flowery day,—
The Land where he is loved the best
Is in the West!—
A thousand leagues away!
So when ye shout to me, *Vive l'Amérique!*
I answer, *Vive Bizet!*

¹ *Carmen* is the Latin word for a song, hymn, or ode.

² Bizet was born in Paris, 1838.

THE TWO HARVESTERS.

I.

THE forests are sere and sober:
 The bronze of October
 Has burnished the leaves:
 The harvest is ready, and will be great:
 O reaper, go gather thy golden sheaves!
 Go gather, I say,
 Thy sheaves to-day!
 To-morrow may be too late!
 To-day, and to-day alone,
 A mortal may call his own—
 To-morrow belongs to Fate.

II.

Now Fate is a cruel crone;
 Capricious and fickle;—
 And after thy sickle
 She sendeth a Scythe Unseen,
 And mortally keen,
 And swinging without a sound,
 And the width of the swath which it leaves behind
 (If visible to mankind)
 Would girdle the world around.

III.

The Swinger who swingeth the Scythe is old,—
 Too old for a day or date,
 And bearded (they say) with grime,—
 Yet ever, in spite of his frosty pate,
 He serveth his Mighty Mistress well;
 For the hoary knave
 Is her willing slave;
 He slashes whatever she bids him fell!

The poets in ages past have told—
 The poets in days to come will tell—
 How lightly he bears
 His years and his cares!

He is hale and strong,
 And he strides along
 With an easy gait
 At a giant's rate!

He is known in rhyme
 By the name of Time,—
 And he worketh the will of Fate!

IV.

He worketh for neither love nor hate,
 Nor careth for good nor ill,
 Nor sleepeth nor sitteth still,
 For a slave is he,
 And a slave shall be,
 And never on Earth can he hope to be free,
 For he worketh another's will.

V.

His work is to cut and kill!
 His weapon is never dull—
 Its temper is superfine!
 He cleaveth the oak and vine—
 He cleaveth the heart and skull!
 For oh! with his Scythe he cutteth deeper
 Than *thou* with a sickle of *thine*!

His stroke, it is strong!
 His reach, it is long!
 His tread, it is lighter than air!
 —And never a man doth he mean to spare!

He follows the great and grand!
 He follows the low and poor!
 And always he strikes with an even hand,
 And always his stroke is sure!

—The singer, the dancer, the laughter, the weeper,
 The king and the clown,
 The great and the small,—
 He ever invisibly follows them all—
 To slash them, and gash them, and hew them down!

VI.

And Fate—as his ruler and owner and keeper—
 Whose bidding he never hath disobeyed—
 Now saith to him, 'Minion mine, what ho!
 I issue to thee
 Another decree:
 Go follow the mowers as now they mow!
 Go follow the reapers as now they reap!
 Go softly behind them, and creep and creep
 (For *thou* art a *sly* old creeper!)

Go follow them like a creeping shade !
 Go haunt them and harry them with the blade
 That moweth the mower and reapeth the reaper !'

VII.

So Time, as the dutiful minion of Fate,
 Now haunts them and harries them, early and late.

VIII.

O husbandman, husbandman, close at thy heel
 The Scythe that is sharper and colder than steel
 Now follows thee fast !
 —So quicken thy speed !
 A fortunate mortal is he indeed
 Who reapeth the harvest which he hath sown !
 Thy meadow is yet unmown !
 So hasten ! The season is brief !
 The autumn will soon be past !
 Go gather, I say,
 Thy sheaves to-day !—
 For oh, to thy rue,
 To-morrow *thou too*
 Shalt be, in thy turn, a gathered sheaf !



PONCE DE LEON'S FOUNT OF YOUTH.

('These are not natural events.'—*Tempest*.)

A NEW VERSION.

I.

THIS mad and merry tale, my gentle friends,
 Is told so often, that you call it trite ;
 But you shall find, before my ballad ends,
 That former bards have never told aright
 The droll adventures of the hoary-headed Knight.

So sit ye down, and though the world has laughed,
 With mirth renewed, for thrice a hundred years,
 And called the hero of the story daft,
 And mocked him as a lout with ass's ears,—
 Yet listen to my lay, and spare your jibes and jeers.

II.

You know that in a tiny Floating Isle,
That once lay anchored off San Salvador¹,
A Magic Fountain bubbled for a while,
Which, though perhaps it sparkles now no more,
Yet wrought a strange enchantment in the days of yore.

The oldest cripples, half a century lame,
Who just could hobble to the fountain's brink—
No matter who they were or whence they came—
Were in a jiffy (or as quick as wink)
Transformed to youth and vigour by a single drink.

III.

This Magic Well, this fountain of delight,
Was guarded by a witch—a griesly Crone
Who in a cave of coral (pink and white,
And paved with madrepores) had dwelt alone
Till she was now the oldest Sibyl ever known.

IV.

The isle had once been anchored, I have said;
But nought could hold it fast against the tide;
It slipped its moorings and away it sped;
And seldom after was it ever spied,
But wandered undetected in the ocean wide.

V.

So though it was the Eden of the Sea,
Yet as to where this grove of beauty lay,
The braggart Indian bards of Caribee,
In boasting of the Fount, could never say;
And strangers, sailing thither, had to guess their way.

¹ Up to the present time, five different islands have claimed to be the San Salvador of Columbus: that is to say, Turk's Island, according to Navarette; Cat Island, according to Irving and Humboldt; Mayaguana, according to Varnhagen; Watling, according to Peschel and Major; and Samana, according to Fox. A re-examination of these various claims was lately made by Lieut. J. B. Murdoch, of the United States Navy, who seems to prove (almost conclusively) that the Landfall of Columbus was at Watling. If this decision stands without reversal, Watling's Island (so called after the old buccaneer, John Watling) should change its name, and be hereafter charted as the real Guanahani or San Salvador.

VI.

And here begins the tale I wish to tell;
 Not the old empty story told before,
 Of how the seeker never found the well,
 But how he found it, and how furthermore . . .
 Yet wait and listen . . . there is wonderment in store¹.

VII.

Old Ponce de Leon—with some younger men,
 To whom, at first, his plan was far from plain—
 Sailed in his caravel from Boriquenne²,
 In faith of finding in the Spanish Main
 This lost yet loveliest link of the Lucayan Chain³.

VIII.

He argued—'I possess unbounded wealth;
 I own an Ocean—or at least the Shore;
 I need but Life and Time, but Youth and Health!
 If *these* were mine, I could accomplish more
 Than any mortal ever dared attempt before.

'But what to me is all my high degree,
 Or what my buccaneering and its gains,
 Or what my lordship of the Carib Sea,
 If I be doomed through all the winter-rains
 To twitch and writhe and wriggle with rheumatic pains?

'So, O ye breezes, louder be your blast!
 And, O ye billows, higher be ye rolled!
 Till I on that enchanted coast be cast
 Where these, my silver hairs, shall turn to gold,
 And this, my rack of bones, shall be no longer old!'

¹ During the first half of the nineteenth century, millions of American school-children (the author of this ballad being one of them) were strictly taught that Ponce de Leon discovered Florida on Easter Sunday, March 27, 1512, and that he gave the country its floral name because Easter lilies were then and there in beautiful bloom. But this sacred date, with its sweet and flowery adornment, must in these later and *fin-de-siècle* days be extirpated from our historic annals: for we are now informed by Mr. Fox—with his myth-destroying mathematics!—that Easter Sunday in the year 1512 did not fall on the 27th of March! Thus it is that history is written—and re-written—and then ~~un~~-written! This collapse of the old chronology has left the present balladist free to deduce a few new dates from Circumstantial Evidence; to evolve several new incidents from Inner Consciousness; and to give the tale a new moral for the sake of Poetic Justice.

² Now Porto Rico.

³ The Lucayas are generally styled in English the Bahamas.

IX.

But though his limbs were now no longer spry,
And though he had upon his scrawny neck
A wen that made him hang his head awry,
Yet never captain paced a quarter-deck
Who carried greater terror in his nod and beck.

X.

Behold my Hero, with his scarlet plume,
His grim moustachios—which he fiercely twirled,
And his tobago-reed¹, whose novel fume
In ever-widening circles since has curled
In one festoon of fragrance round the rolling world!

XI.

Of all the sailors who have ever sailed
Since first the Earth had vessels or a sea;
Old Ponce, so old that now he ached and ailed
With metatarsal gout from toe to knee,
Is the immortal Ancient Mariner for me!

And this is why I bravely volunteer
(With proud ambition in this breast of mine)
To vindicate his seeming mad career,
In happy hope to make his wisdom shine
(And mine with his) from Line to Pole, and Pole to Line.

XII.

His little ship of nine-and-ninety tons,
Though now she seems perhaps a trifle small,
Yet carried culverins and other guns,
With kegs of powder and relays of ball,
Together also with a coracle or yawl;

¹ Though this was the Carib original of the now universal tobacco-pipe, yet strictly speaking Ponce's tobago-reed was not a pipe at all. It had no bowl. It was a long and tapering stalk, hollowed out by expelling the pith: and it terminated at the smaller end in twin off-shoots, or forks, both of which were cut off short, within an inch of their junction, forming by their bifurcation the two prongs of the letter Y. The main stalk—that is to say, the stem of the Y—was half a man's length, or more. A handful of the dried weed was put into a dish or shell, or laid in a small heap on the ground, and set on fire; emitting a heavy smoke. Into this smoke the single end of the stalk was thrust by the expectant smoker; who, sitting to windward of the fume, carefully inserted the two prongs—not into his mouth—but into his nose—a prong in each nostril. If his inhalation was vigorous, he soon had his brain full of fumes—pungent and seductive. In fact the Spaniards found them intoxicating.

Or I should rather say a birch canoe,
Or wicker wherry of the Carib sort—
A tiny boat, not big enough for two,
Which Ponce could paddle, seated on a thwart,
And go alone in, when he wished to make a port.

XIII.

For with his mighty secret on his mind,
Which his companions were forbid to share,
His quest was of a sly and stealthy kind,
Requiring him to go a solitaire,
And much as if he sought the nest-egg of a mare.

XIV.

At every isle he landed all alone,
And dragged his wherry up the grinding shore,
And hunted for the Cavern of the Crone,
In hope to bribe or bully or implore
The wrinkled-visaged Witch to let him drink galore.

XV.

It was before the time of telescopes,
And Ponce de Leon had no optic glass,
But trusted to his eyes—and to his hopes;
And not a spot of greenness did he pass
Without a scrutiny of every tuft of grass.

XVI.

And since such Yuccas he had never seen—
No, not in any verdant vale in Spain—
He asked himself 'What gives them such a green?
It cannot certainly be common rain—
It is immortal water trickling through the plain!

'And find it, by Saint Tibb! I must and will!
How can a fountain keep from being found?
Its living springs must have a running rill
That soon or late shall burst above the ground,
And spill the sparkling waters everywhere around.

'And I will gulp them till my wrinkled skin,
That now is rougher than a hedgehog's hide,
Shall be as smooth upon my brow and chin
As when I started in my youth and pride
With old Columbus for the planet's hither side!

'And *my* discovery shall by far outshine
The else unequalled glory of his own;
For such a wonder-working well as mine—
Creating man anew in flesh and bone—
Shall be a shrine of pilgrimage from every zone.

'The Floating Isle shall then no more go free,
For I will hitch it with a copper chain,
And moor it so securely in the sea,
That while the Heavens shall last it shall remain,
To be an Earthly Harbour free from death and pain!

'And I will prick it on an ocean-chart,—
That to the Fount of Youth all aged men
May steer their course, and may with hope and heart
Bear thither each his threescore years and ten—
There to throw off his burden and be young agen.

'Meanwhile, though good Queen Isabel is dead,
And though King Ferdinand is sick to die¹,
Yet *I* shall never make the grave my bed,
Nor ever bid the merry world good-bye;
For Death shall never hit me, though his arrows fly.'

XVII.

It was the season of those steady gales
That never change their course the summer through,
But hum their music to the swelling sails
And rush the vessel through the briny blue,
And challenge the delighted Dolphins to pursue.

And Ponce, who knew that where the Dolphins dive
The ship is near a hospitable shore,
Wished that old Christopher were still alive
To hail those happy harbingers once more
That welcomed the World-Finder to San Salvador.

XVIII.

'Alas for Christopher! But by the Rood!
I swear,' cried Ponce, 'I will not die as he—
The victim of a King's ingratitude—
Old and in chains! I will be young and free!
And as for Kings, let all such vermin cease to be!'

¹ The queen died in 1504; the king, twelve years later.

XIX.

And Ponce, in raving thus, was not a fool,
But proved himself prophetically wise;
For Kings have had their day; and kingly rule
(A curse to nations) hides its head and dies
Heaven-blasted in a Western World of freer skies.

And I, as Ponce's bard, predict a time
When not in any hemisphere or zone,
Or coast or isle, or habitable clime,
Will there be any King on any Throne;
For all the spacious planet shall be Freedom's own!

XX.

But to my tale!—which seems to lag and loiter,
And limp as languidly as Ponce indeed;
Yet as my Hero had both gout and goitre,
I beg that his adventures may proceed
Without the hurry of uncomfortable speed.

XXI.

Ponce was himself impatient—heroes *are*;
And so, one evening, while his crew encored,
He thrummed like mad upon his old guitar
In honour of a maid whom he adored,—
Till as he thrummed, he cracked and crashed the finger-board.

XXII.

His savage breast was by the music tamed:
And at the breakage, with a rueful ken,
He gazed till he grew sheepish and ashamed,
And swore to touch no mandolin agen
Till he could twang it as the youngest man of men.

XXIII.

The maid whom Ponce adored was in her teens,
And Ponce desired to be as young as she
(Or but a trifle older), as the means
Of winning her reluctant hand: so he—
From Eighty-Two—resolved to change to Twenty-Three!

XXIV.

And I commend him for his keen discretion:
He chose an age for which—I frankly say—
I entertain so fond a prepossession,
That three-and-twenty—could I have my way—
Is just where I would like to stop and always stay.

It is the age when man is at his best,—
When fancy still is young and wit is bright,
When there are fewest sorrows in the breast,
When life is easy, and its burden light,
And when it is a pleasure still to love and fight.

XXV.

My Rover roved through weeks of sun and rain,
Of fog and mist, of hope and hope deferred,
Till he began to think his quest in vain—
When suddenly the old Hidalgo heard
(One eve at dusk) the chirp of a celestial bird.

XXVI.

For unto troubled men, in times remote,
When faith was simple and when doubt was rare,
There sang a Bird Unseen—whose heavenly note
(Heard in the heart, inaudible elsewhere)
Gave to the startled listener hope amid despair.

XXVII.

He listened till he wept. His heart, though hard,
Had at its core a soft and tender spot ;
And heavenly things he held in high regard :
For Ponce was what a pirate oft is not—
The Holy Mother Church's faithful son, God wot !

XXVIII.

Trusting the viewless bird as if in sight,
He steered his vessel by the flying sound,—
Not veering to the left nor to the right ;
And though a hundred rocks shot up around,
Yet safer pilotage no vessel ever found.

XXIX.

The moon was gibbous, yellowing half the sea ;
And Ponce, in peering for a place to land,
Espied a solitary coco-tree
Which, with a nodding tuft, appeared to stand
To bid him welcome to that weird and lonely strand.

In confidence that now his goal was near,
He furled his fluttering canvas in its brails,
And clutched, with both his hands, from ear to ear,
His frosty beard—which glistened like his sails,
And sparkled whilst he combed it with his finger-nails.

XXX.

Casting his anchor by a beetling cliff
 That glassed its double in a clear lagoon,
 He saw, on gliding shoreward in his skiff,
 The solemn Sibyl gazing at the moon;
 And piteously he begged of her the precious boon.

She listened patiently, yet with a frown,
 And sat and clasped her hands and bowed her head,
 And bent her eyelids sorrowfully down,
 And sighed like one whose tears had all been shed
 And who could weep no longer, but who moaned instead.

XXXI.

'O fool!' quoth she, 'this youth-renewing draught
 Is one that *I*, though I am old like thee,
 And though I keep the Fount, have never quaffed:
 And *thou*—ere quaffing it—be warned by me,
 That to be old—then young—defieth God's decree!

'For hath not Heaven appointed unto man
 That though his days be evil, they be few?
 Is life not wisely bounded by a span?
 O thou who rashly wouldst thy youth renew,
 Drink not the dangerous cup, lest it should work thy rue!'

XXXII.

'Thou hag!' De Leon thundered in a rage,
 'Unseal the fount, nor thwart me in my will!
 Give me the draught that rids the old of age!
 Dip me the cup so full that it shall spill!
 And let me drink and drink till I have drunk my fill.'

XXXIII.

The Crone replied with an uncanny voice,
 'I grudge thee not a draught—the fount is free;
 The springs are triple—thou shalt have thy choice;
 Taste one or all, but pay me first my fee
 For pointing out the different uses of the three.'

XXXIV.

He chinked his purse and answered, 'Be it thine—
 And thine be half of all that I possess—
 Pearls from the river, rubies from the mine,
 And feathers of the Trogon¹ for thy dress;
 For I am rich—a buccaneer, as I confess;

¹ These brilliant feathers—carmine, green and gold—all lavishly intermixed—were used by the Montezumas in their royal head-gear.

'Indeed I am a pirate of renown;
But, by the Pyx! and as a man of truth,
I nevermore will plunder ship or town
Except to share the swag with *thee*, forsooth,
If thou wilt give me in exchange the gift of youth!'

XXXV.

At first the Sibyl deigned him no reply,
But pointed at him with her flaky hand,
And rattled from her throat so hoarse a cry
That Ponce imagined he was cursed and banned
For all his dreadful wickedness by sea and land.

But soon the Witch showed pity in her eyes;
As if, in looking at the world so long,
She had observed how seldom men are wise,
And how the wisest oft are in the wrong,
And how the weak are ever victims of the strong.

XXXVI.

Quoth she, 'I value not, O Privateer,
Thy vaunted wealth, whatever its amount:
I ask thee only for thy listening ear
Whilst I—without a largesse—shall recount
The separate magic virtues of the triple fount.

'The fount is triple: God Himself is so—
For ever triune; and by land and sea,
Alike in large and little, high and low,
His works—of every order and degree—
Are founded on a mystic principle of three.

'This subtile trinity eludes the ken
Of mortals of a carnal turn of mind,
And not the King of Spain, and all his men,
If *they* (like *thee*) had landed here, could find
These waters, three in one, yet each of different kind.

XXXVII.

'The first is sweet. And by an instant charm
It gives thee back thy youthful form and face,
And puts the pith of youth into thine arm,
While in thy heart, despite thy youthful grace,
Thy green old age must still retain its wonted place.

'The next is bitter. Virtue in it lies
To make thee young agen in heart alone,
While still the feet of crows shall tread thine eyes;
Nor shalt thou be exempt in flesh or bone
From any of the twinges to which age is prone.

'The third, more wholesome than the other two,
Is tasteless. Most benignly hath it sprung
To antidote what both the others do :—
For this is able, if it touch the tongue,
To cure the old of vainly wishing to be young.'

XXXVIII.

'Give me the first!' cried Ponce, with mad delight,
'Let me be young in body, old in mind!
For Strength and Wisdom, if the twain unite,
Must make the man in whom they are combined
The one most lucky mortal among all mankind.'

XXXIX.

He drank the first,—and never thrill so sweet
Went palpitating through his veins before!
It tingled to his fingers and his feet!
And all at once his hair—from being hoar—
Was turned to golden red, and he was young once more.

And with his youth came all his prowess back,
With more than common stalwartness of limb,
And fists already doubled—as to whack
Imaginary knaves assaulting him!—
And soldier-like he stood, erect and tall and slim!

And neither when he fought his youthful fight
That freed Granáda from the Moors at last,
Nor when the New World hove upon his sight
Whilst he was watching from the Admiral's mast,
Had Ponce de Leon's pulses jumped and thumped so fast!

XL.

But though he now was young in flesh and frame,
He felt no youthful passion or desire—
No tender wish for love—no thirst for fame—
No glowing fancy—no poetic fire—
No lofty hope that lured his spirit to aspire.

The new-made giant felt within himself
A young man's blood, heating an old man's brain,
Kindling the greeds of Age (its love of Pelf,
Its lust of Power)—those itching fevers twain
That drove the doughty captain all at once insane.

¹ The fall of Granáda was on January 2, 1492; and on August 3 of the same year, Christopher Columbus set sail with his fleet from Palos in search of the new continent—having on board his own ship, according to tradition, the youthful Ponce de Leon as a 'cabin-boy.'

And like a bull when first the Picador¹
Has of a sudden jabbed him with a prick,
The old Freebooter bellowed with a roar,
And pawed the ground and gave a lively kick,
And grew infuriate with the spirit of Old Nick!

XLI.

What would he do with his athletic rage,
Too fierce to guide, too fiery to repress?
The old in their behaviour should be sage!
But Ponce, whose brain was under burning stress,
Now planned a daring scheme of loot and lawlessness.

He paddled to his ship with foaming speed,
And sprang upon his deck, and called his men,
And thundered to them, 'Follow where I lead!'
And drew his sword and slashed the air, as when,
In bygone years, he hewed his way to Boriquenne.

XLII.

The crew sat huddled round a cask of sherry,
Which in his absence they had gimlet-holed,
And now, with skulls for drinking-cups, were merry,
And did not recognize their Leader old,
But took him for an Urchin who had thither strolled.

XLIII.

'Up with the anchor! Up with every sail!'
Cried the mad Captain to the marvelling crew;
'Up and away, and whistle for a gale!
And scuttle every ship that heaves in view!
For we are gallant pirates, honest men and true!'

XLIV.

'Pretentious Boy!' quoth they, 'Durst thou command
That we shall weigh our anchor, set our sail,
And leave our aged Leader on the land?
Beware, young rogue, lest over yonder rail
We fling thee to a shark, like Jonah to the whale.'

¹ At a bull-fight, the function of the Picador is this: Bounding into the ring on horseback, holding a lance under his right arm, he receives the bull's charge by thrusting the lance to the right and at the same moment turning the horse to the left.

XLV.

'I am your Leader!' cried their ancient lord
(Who felt his dignity of age the same,
Or even greater, with his strength restored,
Than when of late his gout had made him lame)—
'I am a Lion now, in nerve as well as name!

'And, by this beard!—this lion's mane of mine—
I swear, ye rebels—for my wrath is hot—
That I will cut and cleave, from crown to chine,
Each calf among ye—now and on the spot—
If when I give an order ye obey it not!'

XLVI.

'Thy beard, O Boy?' cried they. 'Now, by the Mass,
What sign of beard is on thy peach-bloom face?
O beardless Youth, thy empty head is crass!
Paddle thyself ashore—paddle apace—
Paddle De Leon's skiff back to its landing-place!

'For by thy false pretences we perceive
That thou hast borrowed with a cunning guile
De Leon's skiff without De Leon's leave;
And he may miss it in a little while!—
Now old De Leon is a dangerous man to rile!'

XLVII.

'I am De Leon, changed from age to youth!'
He vainly cried. Whereat they mocked the more,
And bade him 'Go and cut his wisdom tooth!—
And as he hurried off with boat and oar,
They pelted him with missiles halfway to the shore.

XLVIII.

Sticks, bolts, and bottles hit his head and back!
His metamorphosed body was so bruised,
And his re-marrowed bones so full of wrack,
And both his bran-new shoulders so confused,
That never had a Christian been so badly used!

XLIX.

Piqued that his leadership was thrust aside,
Miffed that his dignity was set at nought,
Stung in his person, smarting in his pride,
He hurried to the Crone, and said, distraught,
'The cup thou gavest me hath my confusion wrought.

'My crew, who see no more my wrinkled brow,
Mistake me for a young and smooth-cheeked lad!
O Beldame, dip thy second bowl!—for now,
Though Youth is what I wish for—yet, egad!
I want it with the same old shaggy face I had!'

L.

The Sibyl dipped her shell a second time,
And gave him from an effervescing spring
A draught that pricked him in his chyle and chyme
As if a hundred hornets on the wing
Had each flown down his gullet with a separate sting.

LI.

His chin at once grew winter-clad with beard:
But now so young a heart bethumped his breast,
That when among his crew he reappeared,
He styled their recent prank a youthful jest,
And ordered them to dance—he dancing with the rest.

'Dance one and all!' he cried—'Dance for your lives!
Dance till the moon goes down! Then swim ashore
And coax the Carib maids to be your wives,
And back to Boriquenne return no more!'
Whereat the tipsy tars set up a jovial roar.

The moon sank smiling at a sight so queer,
And merrily the stars winked at the view;
While Ponce, who had not danced for many a year,
Now boasted of a leg as good as new,
And undertook to foot a whole fandango through.

LII.

You know that such a wild and whirling dance
Stirs up the liver in a lively style:
And Ponce—too elderly to skip and prance—
Had pirouetted but a little while
Before he felt a queasy qualminess of bile.

The fierce fandango overtaxed his age:
So on the slippery deck he tumbled down,
And rolled in helplessness and howled with rage,
And winced with cramps and cricks from sole to crown
And muttered, 'Heave me overboard, and let me drown!'

LIII.

'Old Man,' they cried, 'thy wits are wild as *his*—
That beardless Boy's—who claimed this beard of thine,
And made his cutlass dangerously whizz,
And spake of cleaving us from crown to chine—
'Till we had half a mind to souse him in the brine.'

LIV.

Quoth Ponce, 'The mighty lad of bone and brawn
Who paddled hither and cried "Ship ahoy!"
And leapt on deck, and with his cutlass drawn
Gave word to kill, to burn, and to destroy,
Was certainly a Devil's Imp, and not a boy.

'So I command ye—I, your Captain Ponce—
Haul up the Imp and swing him at the fore,
Or fetch a marlinspike and crack his sconce,
For *I* am *he*—and lest I suffer more,
O comrades, hang me, brain me, drown me—I implore!'

LV.

'Old Ponce is in the doldrums!' cried the crew,
'Give him his customary glass of grog—
Which never yet has failed to bring him to':
But Ponce declined it! and they stood agog!—
And back he paddled shoreward through a friendly fog.

LVI.

Reeking with sweat from toiling at his oar,
Gasping for breath, and groaning with a wheeze,
He dragged his wherry up the gritty shore
And sought the bower of ever-blooming trees,
And dropped before the Sibyl on his bended knees.

LVII.

'O fill for me,' he cried, 'thy final bowl,
And let it countercharm, if so it can,
These cruel changes in my flesh and soul—
For Youth and Age are not, by Nature's plan,
Put both at once together in the selfsame man.'

LVIII.

Cold was the draught, as if from Lethé's river,
And his teeth chattered at the goblet's brim,
And through his body shiver after shiver
Crept like a palsy, and his face grew grim,
And all his gout came twitching back through every limb.

LIX.

'Yes, I am now myself agen,' thought he,
And for assurance, slapped his shaky thighs,
And felt like one who, from a heavy spree,
Recovers with a mortified surprise,
Resolving to be henceforth virtuous and wise.

LX.

Then the old Lion, in the misty night,
Just as the fire-flies fled before the morn,
Took leave for ever of the haggard Sprite,
Who slyly laughed, and said with kindly scorn,
'Farewell, thou famous fool, the greatest ever born!'

LXI.

He found his crew asleep—whom he awoke
By touching off a loaded culverin :
And some believed the noise a thunderstroke,
While others fancied, from the deafening din,
That Gabriel's Trump had blown for Judgement to begin.

LXII.

The bluff old Captain, setting sail agen,
Proved his identity beyond a doubt ;
For in his homeward run to Boriquenne
He daily took his grog, and cursed his gout,
And let his pent-up hurricanes of temper out.

LXIII.

Landing in Boriquenne, with head as hoary
As when he started on his crazy quest,
Old Ponce at first resolved to keep his story
A secret in his solitary breast—
But age is garrulous, and he at last confessed.

And having told his tale, he burnt his Chart¹
So that the Fount could nevermore be found :
Lest other hoary-headed fools should start—
(For there be many such, the world around!)—
Who might upon the coral-reefs be dashed and drowned.

¹ But though he burnt his chart, he did not destroy his diary. This diary was for a time in the possession of the celebrated Spanish historian Herrera. We have Herrera's own word for it. Some searcher of archives will probably bring the lost document to light. The luck of finding it ought to fall to Mr. Henry Harrisse, as a reward for his diligence in searching through half the archives of Europe for Columbian Antiquities.

LXIV.

Meanwhile in Boriquenne there had occurred
 A gay event that gladdened all the isle—
 A joy whereat De Leon so demurred,
 That when he heard of it he wept awhile,
 Nor 'was he ever afterward beheld to smile.

The darling Damozel whom Ponce adored—
 And whom he hoped, on his return, to wed—
 Had in his absence married a young Lord :
 But Ponce forgave them both, and nobly *said*,
 'Be ye my children now—my heirs when I *am* dead.'

LXY.

The rainy season came and drenched the town,
 And brought a mildew, followed by the Grip;
 And Ponce, who mortally was stricken down,
 Called for his grog, and took a final nip,
 And thus addressed his comrades with a quivering lip :

'This Life of ours on Earth is long enough,
 And Death is welcome—thanks to Him by whom
 Our mortal frame is formed of fragile stuff,
 Here to decay, and by a happy doom
 To rise to Immortality beyond the Tomb.'

So spake De Leon on his dying bed,
 And raised his hand, and pointed to the sky,
 And smiling on the bride and bridegroom, said,
 'When ye are old, come join me by and by
 Around the Fountain of Eternal Youth on High!'

LXVI.

His face was beautiful in death (they say);
 And now his statue should in gold be cast
 To teach a world of Living Fools to-day
 How he, the Greatest Fool of ages past,
 Could yet outlive his folly and be wise at last.

LXVII.

Meanwhile, although this Lay of mine of course
 May leave a doubt not easy to dispel,
 Yet if you ask from what authentic source
 I take the tale which I have tried to tell—
 Dear friends, the Truth is from the Bottom of the Well.¹

¹ Dismissing this extravaganza, and reverting to sober history, the balladist begs to add that the Bibliothèque National of Paris (the largest Library in the world) contains no book or manuscript that confers an indisputable date of birth on Ponce de Leon. Nor is the tradition tenable that

LINES BY THE NEXT POPE.

(‘The present Prisoner of the Vatican, Leo XIII, is one of the most advanced Republicans in Europe.’—*Le Temps*.)

A. D. 2000.

I BLESS the world with all my heart
 And every living thing
 Except a mortal set apart
 And wrongly called a King.
 —The only rightful King is He
 Who hears our Paternosters
 —The rest, whoever they may be,
 Are but impostors.

ABDUL-HAROUN'S HORSEMEN.

(A guerilla squad of Jowf lancers¹.)

YE desert-roamers, whither do ye ride?
 Is it to righteous war, and honest fame?
 No, ye are dupes!—for tricksters play the game
 And ye are puppets! Half your clan have died
 For nought except to fire and fan the pride
 Of rival sheiks—who both agen proclaim
 War to the knife—while each, in Honour's name²,
 Brings nothing but disgrace to either side!
 Now though a civil feud be seldom just,
 Yet hearts for Freedom's sake have nobly bled,
 And so are honoured: honour is their due:
 But as for you, ye cut-throats, greed and lust
 Shall earn you infamy in honour's stead!—
 For, O ye hirelings, are ye heroes? *Pooh!*

Ponce was the ‘cabin-boy’ of the *Santa Maria* in 1492. But the modern authorities all concur in saying that De Leon sailed with Columbus on the Admiral's second voyage, which was in 1493; that twenty years later, Ponce (having meanwhile grown old) undertook his expedition to the Fountain of Youth, but discovered Florida instead, on Easter Sunday, 1513; and that the venerable buccaneer died, in green old age, in 1521. His last illness was painfully aggravated by ‘blood-poisoning,’ occasioned by the prick of an envenomed arrow that hit him during one of his skirmishes with the hostile Caribs.

¹ The Jowf Arabs are a clan of the Shererat Bedouins, on the borders of the Syrian desert.

² The Bedouin leaders exact of their followers a sworn fidelity, and the customary oath is, ‘By the honour of the Arabs!’

YAN YANNOK OF YELF,

AND HIS HUMBLE CRITICISM OF THE UNIVERSE.

IN Norway there has been a great change in the national religion.

It was at first Paganism.

It is now Lutheranism.

Between these two—one mediaeval and the other modern—there has grown up a type of speculative philosophy which borrows something from both these opposing systems of thought.

For instance, it has been said that all shoemakers, in every country, are adepts in theology.

The same remark may be made of all cattle-breeders.

There seems to be something in cattle-farming—especially in the raising of ‘fancy’ or ‘prize’ cattle—which gives to its adepts a rationalistic tone of mind.

This is strikingly seen in Texas—where to ‘round up’ a herd of cattle is an event which, in a single season, sometimes does away with a whole previous lifetime of orthodox faith and practice.

It is the Texan opinion that nothing so resembles the devil as a three-year-old steer.

The same is true in Norway.

The breaking of such fine but perverse animals is an occupation which proves very fascinating to men of native force of character.

Yan Yannok’s cattle-farm is at Yelf—in that rich region of Southern Norway which overlooks Strelsa Bay.

I.

YAN Yannok, in his cattle-shed,
Sat musing while his oxen fed.

II.

His thoughts were lofty, for they ran
On themes above the wit of man.

III.

‘O soul of mine,’ quoth he,
‘Is there a God? Are there Angelic Powers?
And can it be
That high up yonder, overhead,
There is a Land more beautiful than ours?’

IV.

‘If so, if so,
How I would like to herd my heifers there!—
Where they could sniff celestial air!—
Where they could drink immortal dew!—
And where their fodder—plenty and to spare—
Would be (like manna) daily fresh and new!

For oh, heigho !
Would that my steers could grow
Yet not require
Terrestrial grass or grain or bin or byre !

v.

'But though the Devil and his Imps
(Before they fell from grace)
Once occupied yon happy place,
Yet not a living man can get a glimpse
Of those green pastures in the sky—
That seem (I think) to need the cow and ox ;
For what are pastures without herds and flocks ?

vi.

'A look at such a Land—a dreamy peep
Such as I get in sleep—
Would be a boon :
And much I therefore marvel why,
Even in June,
The thinnest fog, the slightest rain,
The faintest of the scuds that fly
Should always veil it from the eye ;
—For even at the summer noon—
And in the brightest blue—
This Heaven of Heavens, with high disdain,
Denies itself to mortal view !'

vii.

Thus, on his farm at Yelf,
Yan Yannok (to his shame),
While talking to himself,
Would oft let slip
Some word that misbecame
A reverent lip.

viii.

And so it chanced that, gazing at a cloud,
He chattered to himself aloud,
And thus avowed :
'Now to a callous carl like me,
Whose faith is small,—
Believing only what I see,—
Of course the unseen Heaven above
Is but a place for dreaming of :
The only world that I desire
Is not another and a higher ;

Let me have leave to live upon this blooming ball,
 I care not then
 If gods or men
 Inherit sun or stars or comets, one or all!
 Indeed, however Earth-excelling
 Be Heaven, with its divine perfection,
 Yet I am mundane in my predilection,
 And I would rather, as my place of dwelling,
 Be tabernacled on the wettest side
 Of watery Spangereid¹,
 Or at the wildest foss and fell
 Of windy Angervell²,
 Or by Mount Hecla's fiery roar,
 Or where the Pole is cold and lonely,
 Or anywhere upon the blessed Earth—if only
 My earthly lease,
 My term of tenantry, might never cease,
 But here go on for evermore!'

IX.

—Yan Yannok noticed that a gust was rising:
 He watched it—and went on soliloquizing:
 'I love', quoth he, 'my native Naze,
 Yet as a Norseman I confess
 That as the Earth grows older
 The North keeps growing colder,—
 Till, owing to the Autumn's chilly haze,
 And owing to the Winter's bitter stress,
 The length of human life grows less and less,
 And so, though Nature oft is kind,
 And though we Norskers praise
 Her many gentle ways,
 Yet she is robbing us of half our days!

X.

'This is a mystery needing to be cleared
 Ere Man can hope to think himself endeared
 To nature's heart;
 For cruel Nature coldly stands apart,
 And Man, poor wretch, is now denied
 His place of honour at her side;
 For she has other favourites favoured more than he.

¹ The Spangereid is the low and slender isthmus connecting the Naze with the mainland.

² Cave of the Winds.

XI.

'Thus, though by Nature's odd caprice
Her sacred Cedar tree—
Her pride of Lebanon—has borne a cone
From days of Abram to our own¹;—

XII.

'Though in her ancient dell
Where Jacob dug his well
(That now is dry)
She gives her Tortoise leave to dwell,
Housed in a sempiternal shell—
A tougher roof than triple brass!
(As if the very Earth should pass
Ere he should die);—

XIII.

'Though to her lazy Carp—
Who never swims beyond
The marble counterscarp
That walls his palace-pond²—
She grants the leisure to outlive a line of Kings;—

XIV.

'Though to her ocean-roaming Whale
She portions out his mighty breath to blow
While centuries come and go
And navies rot and cities fail;—

XV.

'Though in her parks of pleasure in Cathay
Her aged Elephant still swings
(As in his young and frisky way)
His cunning trunk, and still unties his cords
After his many short-lived human lords
Have had their little day;—

XVI.

'Though she impels her Eagle to the sky
And gives his master-feather force to fly
Until his hundred years have all rolled by;—

¹ Among the Cedars of Lebanon, some that are still flourishing are locally claimed to be more than 3,000 years old.

² The Empress Eugénie used to feed at Versailles a few big-bellied fish which, in their slenderer youth, had taken crumbs from the hand of Louis XIV.

XVII.

'And even though
Her thievish Crow
Has her assistance to keep young and spy
Long after his most venerable foe
(The whitest-headed farmer) is laid low ;—

XVIII.

'Yet I declare that Nature, granting **thus**
Such years of **grace**
To crowds of creatures of ignoble race,
Displays to *them* a doting prodigality
Which she with stinginess denies to *us* :
For, to her minion of the highest place—
Proud Man—whom she is willing to a **base**,
She shows a niggardly illiberality
By dooming him to swift and merciless **mortality**.

XIX.

'Or if not Nature's self be thus unjust,
Then Nature's God—a Power still **greater**—
Is Man's inexorable Hater :
For though I shrink, as well I may,
From what seems blasphemy to say,
Yet say I will, for say I must,
That our Omnipotent Creator,
In moulding us of mortal dust,
Appears so fiercely to dislike
His poor resemblance of Himself in **clay**,
That always with an angry frown
And vengeful hand He hastes to **strike**
The much-offending image down,
And with implacable disgust
To hide it in the Earth away.

XX.

'Or is it true, as mouldy monks have said,
That the Creator's cruel will
In striking every living creature dead
Is tender, pitiful, and kind,
And that the death-stroke is designed
All in the stricken creature's own behalf?

'How dare the Cenobites assume
That Death is a delightful doom?

'I know of priests who prate
How God, for Love, not Hate,
Awards to Man a mortal fate :
An argument at which I laugh !

'I answer (contradicting still)
 That Death is man's supremest ill;
 That Life, if not a perfect good,
 Is yet a blessedness so great
 That reason cannot overrate,
 Nor fancy guess
 Nor tongue express
 Its most exceeding preciousness!
 — *Who* would not live if so he could?
 Yet Providence or Chance or Fate
 Is always tampering with our date,—
 Fixing our death-day nigh.

XXI.

'And hence I hold' (continued Yan)
 ' (Dispute it whoso may,
 Deny it whoso can!)
 The earthly life of Man
 Is of too short a span:
 His life is far too brief:
 His term is scantied, and too soon goes by:
 Ere he is born, he has begun to die:
 And while he yet is putting forth his leaf,
 He fades away!
 His days, alas,
 Are as the grass!

XXII.

'Now Man's too-early death is wrong—
 He should instead live long;
 For I am sure,
 In spite of all that Man must needs endure
 Of pain or grief,
 Of toil or tears,
 His end is premature—
 He is defrauded of his years!

XXIII.

'We see a May-fly flit about,
 And we who watch him say,
 He lives but for a day!¹
 A Moth has hardly time to flaunt his wing
 Or show his head²,
 Ere he be dead!

¹ The May-fly, the typical insect of the Ephemeroidea, is so *very* ephemeral that, as Wood says, 'A single day witnesses its entrance into the perfect state, and its final departure from the world.'

² The Moth, in fact, often perishes even more prematurely still—through

But Man—proud man—beyond a doubt
 Is after all, poor lout!
 The World's most transitory thing—
 Its most ephemeral worm—
 Whose meagre temporal term
 Should be benignantly increased
 To twenty times its length at least!

XXIV.

'Why should his vigour wane
 Until his years attain
 Once more—as once they did—the ample round
 Of their first-measured and primaeval bound
 When human life on earth—
 In spite of sorrows hard to bear
 (Whereof each heart hath ever found its share),
 Had for its normal term, from birth to death,
 No less a limit than the years of Seth—
 That primal-born, that pious patriarch,
 Third of the sons of many-childed Eve,
 Heir to his brother Abel's empty place,
 And who (unless we disbelieve
 The sacred annals of our race)
 Lived on this globe of ours so long a space,
 That at the last in sooth he proudly found
 His head most winterly and whitely crowned?
 For nigh a thousand years had *he*—
 To hunt and fish and till the ground!

XXV.

—'Why not the same for *me*?
 Why not the same for all my fellows here?—
 Herdsmen of cattle and of deer,
 Hunters upon the hills,
 And fishers in the sea?
 Are we not just as simple men?
 Each living in his native glen,
 Each toiling at his wholesome labours,
 And each at peace with all his neighbours?
 —Not scarred are we with self-inflicted ills,
 Nor are we wasting life's resources
 In crimes and evil courses.

his inability to break his chrysalis—the shell of which, in hot weather without rain, becomes so dry and hard that he cannot crack it open; and he dies *inside*, unborn.

XXVI.

'Now though the World was well-begun
 (For they, the first who sowed its seed,
 Were men indeed),
 Yet what did these, our first forefathers, more—
 On hill or plain—
 Than we ourselves have done
 Beneath as fierce a sun
 And in a frost tenfold as frore—
 To make the ground less grudging than before
 To yield its grain?

XXVII.

'Have we not sown our barren rocks
 And coaxed them into green,
 And dotted them with herds and flocks
 The fattest ever seen?—
 Taking the hules of day and night
 To stripe our cattle black and white—
 Like keys upon the ivory fingerboard
 Of Saint Cecilia's harpsichord¹?

XXVIII.

—'Why is our work cut short?
 Why is our time so scant?
 The frailest ilex which we plant
 On house-roof or on wagon-shed²
 Outbraves the Arctic ice and snow,
 Defying all the winds that blow,
 And still has years and years to grow
 Long after *we* are struck amort
 And shriveled and brought low
 And shoveled under with the dead!

¹ Cattle of these contrasting stripes are especially familiar to travellers in the Netherlands.

² Roof-gardens abound in Norway. They are seen not only on the out-buildings of the farm, but often on the cottage itself. The roof is covered with a rich loam, and this is thickly planted with evergreen shrubs. This house-top shrubbery includes a great variety of picturesque growths—such as dwarf birches, reaching to the ridge-pole—white lichens—red mosses—marsh-grass of vivid green—saxifrages with two or three hundred blossoms on a single stem—daisies by the million—violets of Alpine blue—sorrel of a claret-colour—and even yellow asphodel: and if ever a bold goat climbs by stealth to one of these roof-gardens for his regalement, he is in an earthly paradise for only a moment till he is pelted away and punished, and made to remember the danger of venturing upon such thefts in future.

XXIX.

‘I groan, I fume, I writhe
 To see the fellness of Old Father Time
 Swinging his fatal Scythe
 And mowing mortals down before their prime!—
 Slashing them off, indeed,
 Each as a noxious weed,
 Each as a cumberer of the ground
 To be destroyed wherever found.

‘So Time—to his eternal shame—
 Is known immortally to Fame
 By one dread patronym
 Belonging but to *him*:
 He is the Fell Destroyer! *Who* so fell as *he*?

‘Not Death—for like an over-gorging beast
 Death has a frequent glut,
 And so allows a victim to go free—
 Or free awhile at least:

‘Not Fate—(counted as one or three)—
 For Fate herself is doomed to lag and flag,
 To loiter and to hesitate,
 To spin a thread which she is loth to cut:

‘Not Nature—for if man be in a strait
 She will suspend her laws
 (For righteous cause)
 As when, to free a land,
 She said, “Stop ye and stand,
 Thou sun on Gibeon!
 Thou moon on Ajalon!”

‘But Time—the one supreme Destroyer Fell,
 The ravening child of Chaos and of Sin
 And born in Hell—
 Time—ever hungry, gaunt and thin—
 With ever-greedy maw
 And ever-crunching jaw,
 Gloating at every chance to bite and gnaw—
 Time, with his same old appetite
 Fierce as before,
 Keeps munching still with all his might,
 Feeding galore:

For though the Earth be growing old
 And now is failing (we are told),
 Yet Time, despite his lack of youth,
 Preserves his pristine powers
 Nor ever yet has lost a tooth,
 But still devours
 All that is ours.'

xxx.

Thus spake Yan Yannok while the sky grew black!
 It was a hailstone squall!
 Down came the heavenly pebbles with a thwack!
 'Be grateful, O ye beasts,' he said,
 'For this good shelter of a shed!'

And then, re-filling every rack,
 And patting every cow upon her back
 (For well he loved them all),
 He said—(as if his white-eared herd
 Were listening, and were weighing every word)—

xxxI.

'O ye who seldom look
 Into the Holy Book,
 Go read agen and yet agen
 Upon its earliest page
 The annals of the earliest men,
 The first of all mankind,
 The mighty sires of all our race,
 Who saw their Maker face to face
 And knew His mind;
 And in the record ye shall find
 That in that primal age
 In spite of all the sin and wrong
 That lured poor Adam to his plight
 And smote his Garden with a blight,
 Still, even then,
 The Earth was yet so fresh and new,
 So full of splendour,
 So goodly in its Maker's sight,
 That He to guilty Man declared:

xxxII.

"O thou offender,
 Whom I have smitten yet have spared,
 The loss that follows on thy Fall
 Is loss of much but not of all:

The Fig-tree and the Vine
 Shall still be thine—be thine;
 The Earth is still for thee—for thee;
 It is a gift from Me—from Me;
 Take it, enjoy it long;
 Make it thy blooming bower,
 And I, with dew and shower,
 Will wet it at the morning and the evening hour:

“And lest thy hungry mouth
 Should ever go unfed,
 I, to provide thee bread,
 Have laid on Nature my command
 To lead thee with her guiding hand
 Until, from East to West, from North to South,
 Thou everywhere possess the land;
 And thus, as lord of all the soil,
 Thy daily toil,
 Though seeming-slavish, shall be sweet:

“Thy summer, though it must be fleet,
 Shall still be long enough
 To head and beard for thee thy wheat;
 Thy winter, though it must be rough,
 Shall yield thee crops of ivy-leaves¹
 To round thy cattle into beeves:
 And though thy years, like birds in flight,
 Shall chase each other fast
 And seem too quickly passed,
 Yet vex thyself with no regret
 Nor futile fret,
 For what I give I freely give;
 And so I have decreed,
 To thee and to thy seed,
 That many a lustrum shall ye live
 And many a child shall ye beget
 Ere reaching yet
 The limit set
 For paying Nature's final debt”—

XXXIII.

‘If thus our Gracious God the Lord—
 After the fierce Archangel's sword,
 Two-edged with fire,
 Had driven our Sire

¹ Norwegian cattle sometimes live almost entirely on ivy.

Forth from the Garden Gate
And left him to his fate—
Outcast and reprobate,
A wanderer in the wild:—

'If thus, in that forsaken hour,
Th' Almighty—pitying Man's estate—
Could say to Nature, "Take him for thy ward,
Make him thy foster-child,
Snatch not away from him too soon
His one most precious boon;
Give him ten thousand months to be his measure
Of mortal life (that he may not complain
Of lack of time wherein to work his will
Or take his pleasure),
And let him all his largest plans fulfil,
That he may die, not having lived in vain":—
'If this be what the God of Nature deigned to say
To Nature's very self, in her primordial day,
Why then should Nature not be bound
To give the mandate heed?
Why should she now instead be found—
With miserable greed—
Assigning merely three-score years and ten
To be the limit of the lives of men?
And how, with monstrous malice in her act,
By dire extortion, can she dare exact
Man's final debt to her as falling due
So much the sooner now than when the World was new¹?

xxxiv.

'It makes me sick and sore
That now the Years of Man should be so few.
That were so many heretofore!
For, what can be the doleful need
Why Death should make so mad a speed?
Why, to our bitter cost,
Should the life-quenching frost
Be in such haste to freeze the vital marrow?

'Why should the final agony and throe,
That came so late in ages long ago,
Be now as swift as Höder's fatal arrow²?

¹ The old men in the Book of Genesis were Adam, who lived 930 years; Seth, 912; Enos, 905; Cainan, 910; Mahalaleel, 895; Jared, 962; and Methusaleh (the oldest) 969.

² Höder's fatal arrow is a symbol of the *first frost*. The story in the Edda

Or why (oh shivering to relate !)
Should Nature's primal care for man abate
Or seem to cloy,
As if she nursed her passion to create
Just to destroy ?

xxxv.

' In spite of braggart bards whose rhymes
May boast of these our Modern Times,
And who with vain pretence avow
That Life is at a richer rate
And better worth the living now,
I still aver
That I prefer
No scanty term of earthly pleasure,
But all the patriarchal measure
Conferred by God with freer hand
At that primæval happy date
(Would it were come agen !)
The time when mortal men
Lived long upon the land—
The goodly days of eld,
The best of days that ever were,
The days of Aaron and of Hur,
Who in the battle's roaring rage
The drooping hands upheld
Of feeble Moses, faint with age,
Until the foe was quelled :
But where is now the Jew or Greek,
Or where the mighty faith antique,
That wrestles with gigantic wrong
To snatch the battle from the strong
And give it to the weak ?

xxxvi.

—' Man needeth knowledge : knowledge needeth years !
—Each separate hair of Nestor's hoary head
Was worth a phalanx of a thousand spears !
But what if Nestor had been early dead ?

is, that while Balder (the god of Summer) was disporting himself with other divinities in Asgard—none of whom were suspicious of a coming calamity—Höder (the god of Winter) appeared unexpectedly in the distance. led by Loki (the spirit of Evil), and immediately let fly an arrow at Balder, piercing him to the heart. This Norsk fancy—illustrating the suddenness of Balder's death—is based on the natural fact that the Norwegian summer passes away with lamentable quickness—apparently without the intervention of an autumn: for while yet the roses are in bloom, the snow begins to fall.

—Except for Nestor's frosty pow,
Troy might have stood till now!

XXXVII.

'I hold the Brahmin's creed,
That Life, wherever it is seen,
Even in creatures small and mean,
Yea in the very midge and mite—
Exists as by a sacred right,
A right which every man should heed:
For surely there is human guilt
In crushing with a wanton tread
The little house the ant hath built,
Or causing wilfully to bleed
The caterpillar's pretty head,
Or luring to the flame the midge's wing;
And so the God of Indostán
Hath blessings for the kindly man
Who pitifully every night
Takes pains to shade his candle-light.

XXXVIII.

'Moreover, of all Nature's works
The most inanimate are not devoid
Of something like a Life—to be protected or destroyed:
For not alone
Are flesh and bone
Of man or beast, by Nature's care,
Kept in replenishment and fresh repair,
But even in a very stone
The vital principle in secret lurks—
To keep the rocks from growing old,
To stay the hills from falling dead:
And even on the inner lids of Tombs
There is enscrolled
(Too faintly to be seen
Yet still in living green)
The legend of a life that buds and blooms
And has its time to love and wed.

XXXIX.

'So even I
(Like any other moth or fly
Or crumb of conscious clay)
Desire to live, and not to die:
And though I borrow no distress
From thinking of the doleful day
(Not very distant, as I guess)

When underneath some willow-tree
 There is to be a mound for *me*;
 Yet now while I am still on fire
 With multitudinous desire,
 I burn to say
 That could my frail and mortal flesh
 Keep young and fresh
 (If not indeed for evermore,
 Nor for the term of Seth of yore,
 Nor like Tithonus¹, wasting with decay)—
 Yet if upon this Earth of ours
 I could be privileged to stay
 Still on and on, through frosts and flowers,
 Till I myself should name the day
 When Charon and his muffled oar
 Should scull me to the other shore:—

XL.

'Then by Saint Peter!—by the Pyx!—
 Or by the Moon in perigee!—
 By one or both or all the three!—
 I here and now asseverate
 That ere I finally would fix
 My distant, dim and dismal date
 For ferriage of the River Styx²,
 I first would wait
 Until by fate
 The grim old Ferryman, not I,
 Should be the victim doomed to die,—
 And till his barge and he be rotten
 And both be utterly forgotten,—
 And never after should a ghost
 Be paddled to the Stygian coast
 (That shady shore which mortals dread!)
 And man no more should vex his head
 And sit and sigh
 And feel a lump rise in his throat—
 From awful knowledge that the boat

¹ Tithonus, in praying for Immortality, forgot to ask for Youth and Vigour to accompany it; he was doomed to live for ever, yet all the while to grow feeblér and feeblér; and so he is portrayed by Tennyson as

'A white-haired shadow, roaming like a dream.'

² Of the five rivers in the lower world (according to the Greek mythology Lethé was the river of Oblivion; Phlegethon, the river of Flame; Acheron, the river of Sorrow; Cocytus, the river of Lamentation; and Styx, the river of Abhorrence—that is, the river to be the most abhorred.

Which through the shadow dim
 Is sent to call
 For one and all,
 May now be on its way to *him!*'

XLI.

—Just here the hailstorm stopt.
 —Yan Yannok said, 'The sky has cleared,
 The blue has reappeared,
 The only clouds that still remain
 Are in my brain :
 My dark inquiries end in vain ;
 I cannot make the mysteries plain ;
 So let the theme be dropt !'

XLII.

Yan Yannok's cattle, feeding with content,
 Gave their assent—
 For each made answer with a knowing nod,
 As if to say, 'Poor Yan ! Poor Yan !
 How hard it is for any mortal man
 To reason wisely on the ways of God !'

TO THE MEMORY OF MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF.

[Born 1860, died 1884.]

'I would rather sleep in the southern corner of a country churchyard, than
 in the Tomb of the Capulets.'—EDMUND BURKE.

I.

I AM thy neighbour, O thou mouldering maid !
 And when at dusk thy towering tomb I pass,
 And view its lengthening shadow on the grass,
 I often wish that thou, O troubled shade !
 Wouldst rise from out the crypt where thou art laid,
 And tell me if this pile of stone and brass,
 These carven emblems, and this painted glass
 Content thee as an homage amply paid ?
 Is now thy greed of glory satisfied,
 Or dost thou crave for more ? Thy tale¹—half-told—
 Stops at the threshold of the Iron Door :
 So tell me from thy tomb, Do envy, pride,
 And fierce ambition gnaw thee in thy mould,
 And still devour thee as they did before ?

¹ The diary of Marie Bashkirtseff—which Mr. Gladstone called 'a book without a parallel'—was begun in her twelfth, and continued till her

II.

I daily pass thy graveyard to and fro,
And mount the stony stairway from the street,
To see the City lying at my feet,
Or catch the hill-top breezes, if they blow,
Or watch the sun while he is dipping low:
No other visitor—of all I meet—
Climbs up so oft as I to thy retreat,
Or sits so long, or leaves so loth to go.
Now if amid these cypresses and firs,
With all this heavy weight upon thy breast,
Thy heart be gruesome where thy ashes lie,—
And if thou be a ghost that ever stirs,—
Arise and greet thy most familiar guest,
And tell me, Marie, what it is to die!

III.

Is death a second life? a new career?
And is thy pencil, with a freer hand,
Now drawing fresh designs, more nobly planned
Than aught that won for thee thy laurels here?
Are prizes offered in the Shadowy Sphere?
What are thy honours in the Silent Land?
Have Titian, Tintoret, and all the Band
Of the Immortals crowned thee as their peer?
Humility is woman's whitest pearl!
If thou be fretting still with fever-heat
For further plaudits from the fulsome town,—
Then better far, O thou self-tortured girl!
If thou hadst died a beggar of the street,
Without so tall a tomb to thy renown!

IV.

But if thy wraith have here a house of rest—
If thou be here at home—no wandering ghost,
No exile doomed to Pluto's dreary coast,—
Then on this sacred hill, to crown its crest,
Thy tomb shall proudly, vauntingly attest,
O maiden! who it was that mourned thee most!—
Although there needs no marble thus to boast
That mother-love—of all the loves—is best.

twenty-fourth year. Her final entry in this unique document was penned eleven days before her death. Her costly tomb—the most imposing structure in the Passy Cemetery, in Paris—is in the form of a Russian chapel, and its interior is sufficiently spacious for the holding of private memorial-services by the family.

Thy mother was thy queenly slave—too proud
 Of her too darling daughter! Such a pride
 Must lose its idol! I beheld with awe
 Thy mother thus bereaved!—how bent!—how bowed!
 Her forehead smote the earth! I turned aside
 And dared not gaze upon the grief I saw!

v.

For, oh these moaning mothers!—these are they
 Who suffer twice!—first when their babes are born,
 And then (with keener anguish rent and torn)
 When their beloved ones are snatched away!
 O Marie! dost thou witness from thy clay
 How year by year thy mother, still forlorn,
 Comes to thy sepulchre to sit and mourn,
 And how she lingers here to kneel and pray?

And even strangers hither come to weep:
 So if thou once wert covetous of fame,
 Thou hast it now: for had thy kinsmen piled
 No stone of all this monumental heap,—
 Still all the nations know thee by thy name,
 Thou petted, spoilt, aspiring, noble child!

vi.

Thy graveyard is a garden. But I come
 In winter also, to thy sacred hill,—
 When snows have drifted, and when winds are chill,
 And when the shivering ground-mice, cold and numb,
 All stay at home, and not a bee will hum!
 I love the place—it is so calm and still!
 —Would I might question thee of good and ill,—
 Of life and death,—but thou art mute and dumb.

And yet the silence of this sacred spot
 Is like a language—chiding, day by day,
 Yon roaring, rattling streets—which are too rife
 With greed and pleasure—things that profit not!
 But Death itself here speaks, and seems to say:
 Behold, how great a vanity is Life!

vii.

I love to see the sunshine pierce a tomb!
 The light of Heaven brings glory to the grave!
 Thy charnel-chamber is no murky cave,
 But cheery with the gayest flowers that bloom—
 Each in its season: and their brief perfume

Is like the transient breath which Nature gave,
O girl! to thee: each bud, though bright and brave,
Fulfils (like thee indeed!) an early doom!

Thy idle brush and palette, craped and hung
Beneath a broken palm-branch on the wall,
Seem pitifully saying, Why, oh why
Did fickle Fate, to such a maid, so young,
Give genius, beauty, fortune, friends and all,—
Yet doom her, ere her work was done, to die?

VIII.

O shrouded damsel! What of Bastien too?—
Thy lover!—death-struck in the selfsame way,
Just in his prime and promise! . . . This, my lay,
Must name ye both, for Love must have its due! . . .
Two arrows side by side together flew,
As if the Fatal Archer meant to slay
Two hearts at once, upon the selfsame day!—
Ere they could wed, or ere they scarce could woo!

Is *he* for ever young, O bonnie belle?
Art *thou* for ever fair? . . . Complete thy tale!
Whisper the sequel through the Iron Door!
Or is there nothing for the dead to tell?
Hast thou thyself no glimpse behind the veil?
Is Death but dust and ashes, nothing more?

IX.

Oh say, Is Death as worthless to the dead
As Life is to the living? Then, oh why
Should any mortal seek to live or die?
And why, O child, above thy lowly head
Should all these lofty spangles be outspread,
And this colossal dome be built so high?
—Full many a Queen hath died, who doth not lie—
With all her honours—in so huge a bed!

When I, thy bard, am summoned soon or late
Into the ghostly land where thou dost dwell,—
I cannot hope to enter there like thee,
O glorious maiden, through so grand a gate
Nor under such a gilded dome! . . . Ah well,
A simple, common grave will do for *me*.

PARIS, *July*, 1895.

¹ The two deaths were just forty days apart. The dates are as follows: Marie Bashkirtseff died October 31, 1884, aged 24; and Bastien Le Page died December 10, in the same year, aged 36.

DOGGEREL.

(Disrespectfully addressed to the Dog that lives next door.)

I.

O FRIEND of Man! (for men themselves so name thee)
I, who apostrophize thee, love thee well;
I never worry thee; I seldom blame thee;
But in the name of Heaven—(or no, of Hell)—
Why art thou, at the midnight hour,
Such a bow-wow-er?

II.

Dost thou mistake me for a robber prowling,
That thou so loudly, and so late at night,
Dost wake the very watchman by thy howling,
And trick the town with dreams of dynamite,
Or crack of doom,—as brought to pass
By Turpin's gas?

III.

Why, when I quit some crew of late carousers,
And stagger zigzag on my homeward way,
Dost thou attack my newest pair of trousers,—
Until I find them, on the following day,
By reason of thy nip and tear,
Not fit to wear?

IV.

Thy heart, although humane, yet harbours rancour,—
Especially against the feline race;
And often I have seen thee itch and hanker
To cause the same to quit the quiet place
For which they had the most desire,—
Say, at the fire!

V.

It would delight me if some rat of vigour,
Sleek and sagacious, bold but not too bold,
Small like thyself, or just a trifle bigger,
Should wreak his will upon thee, and get hold
Of thy loud larynx in the dark,
And stop thy bark!

VI.

If Samson, when he stole the Gates of Gaza,
 Had heard, upon that memorable night,
 A dog like thee, upon a back piazza,—
 The giant would have shivered with affright,
 And would have cast his burden down,
 And quit the town!

VII.

Thou art a tiny dog, yet most audacious;
 And very English in thy native growl;
 And not the Heavens themselves, though they are spacious,
 Seem big enough to hold thy horrid howl
 Whilst thou, through all these nights of June,
 Bayest the moon!

VIII.

Some say the human cranium, by its sutures,
 Gives a clear tip of man's superior brain;
 But thy purloining,—at a neighbouring butcher's,—
 Of his chief chine and cutlets,—makes it plain
 That, as the Turkish sages say,
 Dogs have their day!

IX.

Their *day*! But shall they have their *night*? By Jingo,
 I answer *no*!—with two d's, and a dash!
 To lie awake and listen to their lingo
 Makes town and Hamlet 'splénétive and rash!'—
 'Throw physic to the dogs,' as saith
 The bold Macbeth.

X.

What physic shall I throw to *thee*, O bawler!
 A dose of bootjack? or of cobblestone?
 Thou art so small that scarce a dog is smaller,
 And yet a noisier cur was never known!—
 And just to hear thee, I declare,
 Makes a saint swear!

XI.

If thou wert mine. and not my neighbour's puppy,
 And I possessed the right to dust thy skin,
 I, too, would show my teeth, and eat thee-uppy!—
 And if agen thou nip me on the shin,
 I know a little game of wit
 Called Biter Bit!—

XII.

So on the Glorious Fourth,—when Yankee Doodle
 And Hail Columbia are in fullest gale,—
 I will tie Chinese Crackers, O thou poodle,—
 A lighted pack!—suspended from thy tail!—
 And dance thee off, with fife and drum,
 To Kingdom Come!

 THE PATIENCE OF HOPE.

I.

I SAW at daybreak, in a garden-bed,
 A thousand opening tulips—holding up,
 Each piously to Heaven, its empty cup
 To catch the coming sunshine—and I said:
 Oh what a Heaven-compelling faith is theirs!—
 They gain their wishes ere they end their prayers.

II.

Whereat, in envy of the plants, I sighed;
 For I remembered, with a keen regret,
 A thousand prayers of mine unanswered yet;—
 Prayers so aspiring, yet so long denied
 That Heaven, to humble me (said I) has brought
 The total thousand, each and all, to nought!

III.

Then in the dewy garden, dim and cool,
 I chid my unbelieving heart. Said I,
 Is Heaven for mortals to arraign? Oh fie!
 A man who carps at God is but a fool!
 Can Providence be deaf? Or, when we pray,
 Is it His wont to turn His head away?

IV.

Not so! The thousand tulips, all and each,
 Will get their sunshine! Prayers go not unheard!
 And though—to mine—the answers be deferred,
 Yet I will wait; for, as the tulips teach,
 The sun is coming—it will soon be up—
 And Heaven shall fill for me my empty cup!

JARDIN DU TROCADERO, May, 1893.

G g

MICHEL-ANGELO BUONAROTTI

TO THE PRINCESS COLONNA,

On the occasion of his finishing, for her tomb, a miniature of her face
and bust, in ivory, which he had begun before her death.

THIS image of thyself, I bring to thee—
O thou, my dream of dreams, for ever past!
Thy beauty was too beautiful to last!
How could so fair a being cease to be?
But what is life except an almond-tree,
That blossoms early, and that withers fast?
—The day I lost thee, how I stood aghast!
—But no! thou never shalt be lost to me!
O perfect brow, as Greek as Hera's own!
O shining eyes, brighter than aught they saw.
Goddess thou wert, and Goddess shalt remain!
Immortal spirit! With a lover's moan,
Here on thy hallowed urn, with chilly awe,
I lay my love-gift,—late, and now in vain!

A STRANGE REPLY.

I ASKED a Balkan hermit, 'What is prayer?'
Quoth he, 'It is an empty cry,
An unrewarded sigh,
An idle breath of air,
A futile vain device
Which men in misery and despair
Imagine will suffice
To reach the Gods above the sky,
Who, listening there,
Will of their pity not deny
But grant the ever-foolish plea
(For foolish it must ever be).
And though thou feel,
Whilst thou art in the act to kneel,
That prayer is something strangely sweet,
Think not, O man, to lure and cheat
The most high Gods by bowing at their feet!
They never can be duped and wheedled so!
And though indeed a bended knee
Is what the Gods delight to see,

Betokening reverence to their deity,
 Yet well they know
 That when the mind of man is overwrought
 With too much sorrow, too much care and thought,
 The suppliant begs for what he never ought;
 And so the Gods must turn away,
 And answer Nay:
 And every mortal therefore should be taught
 That though he kneel and pray
 Not less than seven (or seventy) times a day,
 Yet vain will be his every plea or hope
 If it transcend
 The limit of the life whose scope
 Hath here an end.'

Thus spake the Balkan hermit, on the height
 Of Mount Edrarda, where he dwelt
 Amid those summer snows
 That never melt—
 So near was he to Heaven! A saint indeed
 But, oh! how quaint a creed!
 Can it be right?
 —I think, not quite!
 —And yet, Who knows?

THE CUP OF WRETCHEDNESS.

(*En Villégiature.*)

O HEART of mine, how art thou racked and rent
 Yet in this cottage, in these summer days,
 I could be happy in a hundred ways—
 Or, if not happy, yet at least content:
 I have an arbour which the birds frequent,
 And where I sing to them my latest lays,—
 They theirs to me: and I have flocks that graze,
 And bees that hum: why then do I lament?
 Is it the sighing wind that makes me sad?
 Is it the ocean's melancholy swell?
 Oh no! Then why—for forty days egad!—
 Have I been wretched—like a soul in Hell?
 The coffee (damn it) has been deuced bad!
 —So now, O dulcet country life, farewell!

*Chaumière d'Armorique,
 Cap Finistère, fin d'été.*

TEMPORA MUTANTUR.

'A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!'
 Cried wretched Richard in his hour of need.
 But this was long ago. He now, of course,
 Would call instead, for his velocipede.

THE MUSIC OF THE FUTURE.

[*A specimen of new and improved vocalization.*]

BAYLY the Troubadour
 Touched his gitaw-ar
 When he was hastening
 Home from the waw-ar,
 Singing from Palestine
 Hither I co-um,
 Lady love, lady love,
 Welcome me ho-um¹!

THE LAMENT OF A PESSIMIST.

'ALAS!' quoth Tom—(who is a modern cat)—
 'I have seen better days! There was a time
 When I—in Egypt's corn-producing clime—
 Guarded the grain-bin from the mouse and rat:
 I then was sacred: Pharaoh fed me fat:
 A pure religion then was in its prime
 And made the killing of a cat a crime:
 So all the kittens which I then begat
 Were cared for by the King. They now are drowned!—
 Or, from a litter say of nine or ten,
 But *one* is saved. The fact is, I have found—
 (Comparing manners now with manners then)—
 That all the antique virtues, once renowned,
 Have since declined—alike in cats and men!'

¹ This, of course, refers to Thomas Haynes Bayly and his celebrated song beginning—

'Gaily the Troubadour
 Touched his guitar.'

THE ARCTIC APOLLO.

A CHRISTMAS IDYL.

Introductory Note.

THE myths of all countries symbolize the phenomena of Nature, especially the obvious contrast of winter and summer, storm and calm.

In other words, they are woven of the atmosphere; and they personify the climate.

However often their interpretation is to be referred to religion and race, it is to be still oftener deduced from geography and latitude.

Accordingly a myth of the South catches a new spirit when it becomes a myth of the North.

For instance, in the skies of Greece, which are without a cloud for months at a time, the most awe-inspiring display that an Arcadian shepherd could ever witness of Nature's energy was a terrific tempest with lightning and thunder; and hence Zeus, as the chief god of Olympus, has come down through Greek art as wielding a whole handful of thunderbolts.

On the contrary, in Iceland, where the Norse mythology came to its fullest flower (or where it first achieved its written record), the prevalence of stormy or dark weather has always been so common and familiar, that Nature's supreme struggle, to a Viking's view, was not to produce thunder and hailstones, but sunshine and a blue sky: and hence the chief of the twelve great Norse Gods is Odin or the Sun—an amiable Jupiter without a single Jovian bolt; while the Norse thunderer is Thor, who is but little superior in honour to the frost-giants whom he fights.

Odin is the hyperborean Apollo.

But there is a difference.

The Olympians are immortal; but the Norse Gods are to perish at the day of Ragnärök, which is the End of the World.

Knowing therefore that they are to die like earth-born men,—and having their mortality thus ever hanging over them like a human fate,—the Asas (or Northern divinities) are remarkably *human* in their thoughts and acts, and are familiarly spoken of in the folklore as visiting the huts of rustics and fishermen, and as holding colloquies at the humblest firesides.

Odin, as the two Eddas paint him, is a tall, aged patriarch,—not only human, but eccentric,—not only venerable, but grotesque.

He has but one eye; and this is emblematic of the Sun's orb.

He wears an old gray hat; typifying a zenith of fog.

He attires himself on fine occasions in a red jacket, striped with variegated hues: which are the streaks of dawn and sunset.

He rides a horse named Sleipner, who has eight feet; these being the Winds.

He stables his horse, and walks; attended by two wolves and two ravens. His wolves are Geri the greedy, and Freki the fierce; meaning the all-swallowing snow, and the all-threatening ice. His ravens are Munin and Hugin, or memory and meditation.

He has a spear named Gungner; not wholly of the celestial temper of Ithuriel's, but in part a wizard's wand.

He lives on wine only, never eating a morsel of food.

He hung as God and Man, both in one, for nine days on a tree,—bound to its boughs; a manifest re-echo of the story of Calvary.

He has borrowed some of the prophecies of the Bible; notably the promise of a new Heaven and a new Earth, after the dreadful day of Ragnärök.

He is a quaint and puzzling personage, half heathen and half Christian;

a mixture quite natural at the era of his entrance into literature, which was during the Middle Ages, and whilst Northern Paganism was undergoing its transformation to Christianity.

As the inventor of poetry and runes, it is in keeping with his mediæval character that he should roam about as a wandering minstrel, winning his charitable welcome by his harp.

If his adventures (as the skalds relate them) are often droll and even boisterous, the explanation is found in the pitiless and inexorable law of heredity; for this unimmortal, manlike and amusing God necessarily retains the innate instincts of the uncanny Giants from whose rough race he sprang.

The Eddas give him a dozen different names; among all which the one most widely known is derived from his travels: he is Odin—or the Wanderer.

It may be added that Yule, as a name for Christmas, came into British usage from the Icelandic tongue. The etymology of the term was formerly disputed. But Professor Skeat now says: 'The best solution of this difficult word is that given by Fick. He explains *yule* as meaning "noise or outcry," especially the loud sound of revelry and rejoicing.'

I.

THE one-eyed Odin daily fareth forth
To view the North.

Sometimes upon his wild eight-footed steed
He rides with speed;

Sometimes his wolves are with him—answering, tame,
Each to a name;

Sometimes his ravens on his shoulders sit,
Or round him flit;

Sometimes he carries what the Earth may fear—
His battle-spear;

But when he comes at Yuletide,—folk desire
To hear his lyre.

II.

This is the lyre wherewith, by land and sea,
He sets the key

Of every wind that blows—and pine that sighs—
And gull that cries;

Of every song of every singing bird;
Of noises heard

When icebergs crackle—and the walrus roars—
And the rain pours—

And the dew plashes on the moss-green ground;
Of the faint sound

Of wool in growing on the backs of sheep ;
 Of the loud leap
Of waterfalls ; of every voice alive !—
 The hum of hive—
The low of pasture-field—the croak of fen—
 The speech of men—
The luck-foretelling cricket as he shrills—
 The ominous trills
Of death-moths—and the merry sharps and flats
 Of buzzing gnats.

III.

This is the lyre whereto, on winter days,
 While Odin plays,—
The ice-bound brooks come rippling down the hills
 In melted rills—
The meadow-haunting elfins leap and prance—
 The rabbits dance—
The reindeer, with his hoof, digs in the snow
 Where lichens grow—
And ere the earliest cock on any farm
 Sounds his alarm,—
The morning-stars, in the clear Christmas weather,
 All sing together.

IV.

But Odin's harping chiefly is designed
 To cheer mankind :
Through every village whilst the Yuletide lasts,—
 Despite the blasts,—
Despite the frosts,—from door to door he hies,
 And in disguise
Asks for an alms—repays it with a lay—
 And slips away :
Or if the housewife nods, he takes her broom
 And sweeps her room—
Or brings, and leaves beside her spinning-wheel,
 A bag of meal :

And when she wakes, she says,—(smiling upon it)—
 ‘The dwarfs have done it!’

v.

So, though he be a guest in many a cot,
 Folk know him not.
 They say, ‘A harper with a huge gray hat
 Came here and sat,
 ‘And harped to us awhile on Christmas eve—
 Then took his leave:
 ‘We may not see him till the next year’s Yule:
 He is a fool:
 ‘He sits at table yet will never eat,
 But flings his meat
 ‘Half to the dogs: the other half he throws
 To feed the crows!
 ‘He harps with fingers thrice as big as thumbs—
 And thrums and strums!’

vi.

So say the peasants. Also, at their ale,
 They tell a tale
 How the old Harper met, one Christmas morn,
 A Youth forlorn
 Who thought the God a beggar, and who said,
 ‘Bards must have bread:
 ‘So take this coin—lest for thy lack of pelf
 Thou drown thyself:
 ‘Or shall I wish thee, for thy noisy twanging,
 A quiet hanging?
 ‘Yet nay, thou good old man, forgive my rude
 And bitter mood,—
 ‘And tell me how a wretch whose heart is wrung
 Can hold his tongue.’
 —And the sad Youth sat down upon a stone
 And made a moan.

vii.

Now Odin loves to laugh. He searches round
 Where mirth is found.

Thought he, 'This is King Hakon's lovesick son!
So here is fun!

'The lad has megrims!—he is steeped in gloom!—
I know for whom!—

'She is my daughter!—born in Heaven above him,
Too high to love him!

'She flouts his suit, and leaves the jilted Prince
To writhe and wince:

'So I will chaff him—mock him—taunt him—guy him,
All just to try him!'

VIII.

Whereat the great God, on his bended knee—
(A sight to see!—

Said humbly, 'Thou art prayed for, I am sure,
By all the poor.'

IX.

The Youth made answer, 'Thank me not! Move on
And get thee gone!'

X.

—'But I can give thee something worth possessing,—
An old man's blessing!'

XI.

'Bless me no blessings—I would die in peace!—
Let thy tongue cease!'

XII.

'Thy sire, O Boy!—(if I be not mistaken)—
Is old King Hakon:

'Thou shalt be king ere ending of the year—
Be of good cheer.'

XIII.

'O agèd fool, the fate of kings is known
To Heaven alone!'

XIV.

'But thou art young—youth is for joy and hope!
Why dost thou mope?

'Are wars at hand? Art thou afraid to fight
For truth and right?

'Why blench? I have for thee a battle-charm
Against all harm.'

xv.

'I fear not Death nor Fate,' the Prince replied,
'Nor aught beside!'

xvi.

—'Or shall I give thee what is oft a curse—
Gold for thy purse?'

xvii.

'I scorn it,' cried the Youth—'it is the old
Who grasp at gold.'

xviii.

The sly old God, to tease the Prince awhile,
Said with a smile,

'Thy dearest wish—whatever it may be—
I grant to thee.'

xix.

The Prince—half angry, half abashed—stood meek,
And did not speak.

xx.

Then Odin asked, 'Why art thou thus become
At once so dumb?

'Is it a sickness? Hast thou fasted long?
Or what is wrong?

'Tell me the reason why the sparkle dies
In thy young eyes.

'And tell me what a youth so brave and true
Would have me do.

'For I, with this my harp of runic strings,
Do cunning things:

'Not even Orpheus, when he harped in Hell,
Had such a shell:

'Is there a burning house? I touch my lyre
And quench the fire:

'Is there a fettered captive? With my strains
I loose his chains:

'Is there a whizzing javelin, aimed in spite?
I turn its flight:

'Is there a poison for a guest to sup?
I spill his cup:

'Is there a foeman sailing up the fiord?
I dull his sword:

'Is there a sinking mariner to save?
I oil the wave:

'Is there a youthful Prince athirst for fame?
I chaunt his name:

'And I can do him sweeter service still—
If so he will.'

XXI.

The Prince cried out, 'O braggart, boast no more!—
Thy head is hoar:

'I reverence age, but folly I despise:
Thou art not wise:

'Should Odin hear thee—he, to thy disgrace,
Would slap thy face!'

XXII.

'O son of Hakon,' cried the God, and laughed,
'Men call thee daft!—

'They say thou lovest Hildegard the Fair—
To thy despair:

'For must not Odin's daughter—heavenly-born—
Hold thee in scorn?'

XXIII.

'Yea,' cried the Prince, 'beyond all hope of mine
She is divine!

'And yet, O would that I could tempt her down
To share my crown!

'For with a heavenly angel at my side,
To be my guide,—

'I then might prove (what soon the land will need);—
A king indeed!'

XXIV.

Quoth Odin, 'Wouldst thou win the heavenly maid?
Ask thou my aid!—

'For I can bring her—by her sire's command—
Straight to thy hand.'

XXV.

Upleapt the Prince—no longer sick and pale,
But sound and hale!

'O Odin, grant my dearest wish,' he cried—
'Bring me my Bride!'

XXVI.

In Odin's chariot,—and in bride's array,—
She came straightway.

Quoth she, 'O Prince!—at whom I frowned and pouted,—
And whom I doubted,—

'My fear was, lest thy heart should crave the things
Most sought by kings:—

'Pomp, Glory, Victory, Power,—and all the rest!
These are unblest!

'These are unworthy!—Wisdom!—this alone
Adorns a throne!

'A beggar may outking thee! Be not vain!
I would disdain

'To share thy realm, save that in thee I find
An humble mind.'

XXVII.

So Odin gave his daughter to a man!
—And fountains ran

With wedding-wine!—And to the twain, thus wed,
The great God said:

XXVIII.

'Be fruitful! Cover with a finer race
The whole Earth's face!

'Let them in limb be beautiful and strong!
Let them live long!

- 'Give them a Paradise—fair as the first
Ere it was curst!
- 'But let no wily Serpent enter in,
To make them sin!
- 'Forbid them no True Knowledge, but restore
Their long-lost lore,
- 'And let them speak agen the speech of birds!
And let their herds
- 'Escape the bloody sacrificial knife!—
And let the strife
- 'Of murderous armies, madly now contending,
Have peaceful ending!—
- 'And let the roses bloom on Christmas morn
Without a thorn!
- 'For so, O son and daughter, late or soon,
By lyre and rune,
- 'And by responsive echoes from afar
In moon and star,
- 'I shall re-knit my broken realm once more,—
Till, as of yore,
- 'Both Heaven and Earth,—with Eden re-begun,—
Shall twain be one!

XXIX.

Thus Odin promised!—Has it come to pass?
—Not yet, alas!

Mayhap it *will*—when Christmas comes agen!
—IF NOT, O WHEN¹?

¹ At the end of this volume will be found an Appendix, giving a digest of the whole, strange, weird, crowded and tumultuous Mythology whereof the great God Odin is the temporary but not the eternal chief.

His contradictory yet not irreconcilable attributes (as the Appendix will show) make him a very man-like and uncelestial sort of a deity.

It is with no strictness of speech that he is called the Boreal or Arctic or Northern Apollo.

Not even 'Balder the Beautiful' can lay claim—in such a northern kingdom—to such a southern title.

The simple fact is, that the World's great pagan or mythological religions—each being based upon a natural foundation of climate—differ as widely from one another as their climates differ.

Hence any presupposed analogy between Apollo on the one hand, and Odin or Balder on the other, is more fanciful than accurate.

A DELPHIC RESPONSE.

A THRONG of Greeks from all the Corinth coast
 Went up with offerings to Apollo's shrine,
 Expecting from his Oracle a sign
 To signalize to all the motley host
 Which of their many gifts he prized the most.
 The gifts were gold and ivory—oil and wine—
 Pearls from the main, and rubies from the mine—
 And every treasure which the East could boast.
 A poor old cripple limped behind the crowd,
 And made the final gift. It was his crutch.
 —'This beggar' (so the Oracle avowed)
 'Gave all he owned : no prince gave half so much.'
 —Whereat a sunbeam fell from out a cloud,
 And cured the cripple by Apollo's touch.

THE JUDGEMENT OF JUPITER REVERSED

ONE day, in looking from Olympus, Zeus—
 Seeing the world at war—(a sight he hates)—
 Said indiscreetly to the Triple Fates :
 'Go bind the Triple Furies—they are loose!
 Haste to the tented fields—proclaim a truce!
 Forbid this battering-down of walls and gates!
 Peace is the blessing which the world awaits!
 This carnage is a crime without excuse !'
 The Fates responded : 'Were the Furies bound—
 Were the sword sheathed—were peace perpetual—then,
 O Sire, instead of Valour, laurel-crowned,—
 The Love of Lucre, spreading among men,
 Would so corrupt the race, the world around,
 That Doom would crack, and Chaos come agen !'

LAMENT OF A LADY'S SADDLE-HORSE.

I ONCE was honoured, petted and caressed,
 And gently stroked upon my neck and flank;
 And if I ever shied, or played a prank,
 My Lady—though she chid me—yet confessed
 That she admired the spirit I possessed;
 And when she made me gallop down a bank,
 Or jump a fence,—she said that I would rank
 Among a thousand geldings as the best.

Alas! My Lady since has changed her mind!
 (They say the minds of women often change!)
 She used to give me sugar. Now I find
 That she forgets me. It is sad and strange.
 I am a horse my Lady used to like,
 But now she cares for nothing but her bike.

TO THE GIRL GRACIOSA.

YOU little know yourself, my bonnie belle!
 So in your Album I will take a page,
 And being old, and privileged by age,
 (Ere age forbid me—which I know full well
 It shortly shall—for Time is fierce and fell)
 I now will sketch you here: (though I engage
 To pick such words,—so sober and so sage,—
 That none shall guess I love you, Damozel!)

Then, bonnie belle, you have a heart so true,
 A mind so pure, a wit of such a flow,
 A laugh so catching, and an eye so bright . . .
 But no—I stop—for what I meant to do
 (Which was, to tell your virtues) is, I know,
 What only an Archangel's pen can write!

THE PRAYER OF THE NATIONS.

‘Give unto us Peace, in our time, O Lord!’

I.

O THOU by whom the lost are found,
 Let now Thy Cross—(if still it stands
 On ancient Calvary's hallowed ground)—
 Be once agen, to all the lands,
 A sign of peace, the world around!

II.

For all the earth remembers still
 What many a Christian bard hath sung—
 How when upon Thy holy hill
 The shadow of Thy Cross was flung,—
 No nation wrought a nation ill!

III.

Once more, O Christ, so mote it be!—
For happy was that holy time
When all the globe, by land and sea,
Hushed all its wars, in every clime!—
Such honour then was paid to Thee!

IV.

Such honour shall to Thee agen
Be paid as in the days of old!
And yet, oh how or whence or when?
For now the nations cast and mould
Their murderous guns to slaughter men!

V.

And never since the world was made
Have all the nations of mankind
Stood as they stand to-day—arrayed,
Each in its armour, mad and blind,
And ready for a red crusade!

VI.

Crusade? But is Thy Cross to blame?
Not so! These wars, O Crucified,—
Although their banners flaunt Thy name,—
Yet pierce agen Thy wounded side,
And bring Thy Cross and Thee to shame!

VII.

Thy Cross! Let now its shadow fall,—
To intercept the flashing sword,—
To stay the whizzing cannon-ball,—
To shed on every warlike horde
The Peace of Heaven—for one and all!

VIII.

Thy Cross was once a conquering sign!¹
So let its shadow now outreach
To all who dwell from Palm to Pine
To knit each human heart to each,—
And all, O Crucified, to Thine!

IX.

The Morning Stars give forth a song,
But, like a discord in the strain,
The Earth, through all her years of wrong,
For ever moans as one in pain,
And cries, How long, O God, how long?

¹ *In hoc signo vinces.*

X.

Yet not a star of all the sky
 To Thee hath fairness like the Earth,—
 That rolls her zones before Thine eye
 To show to Heaven Thy place of birth,
 And sepulchre where Thou didst lie !

XI.

O Thou who cleansest men from sin,
 The Heaven of Heavens, impatient, waits
 Till round the Earth Thy reign begin !
 —Oh be ye lifted up, ye gates,
 And let the King of Glory in !

XII.

O King of Kings ! Come as of yore
 The Prince of Peace to every land !—
 Till every weapon as before
 Shall drop from every warrior's hand,
 And till the world learn war no more !

PARIS, *July, 1893.*

THE TROCADÉRO SPARROWS.

'I shall not ask Jean Jacques Rousseau
 If birds confabulate or no !—'

COWPER.

I.

YE hungry Sparrows, gamins of the street,
 Audacious beggars, craving each a crumb,
 Do ye imagine that I never come—
 These summer mornings—to this garden-seat
 Save with a whole huge loaf for you to eat ?
 Ye tiny tots, each with a tiny *tum*,
 I never bring you much, but always some !
 Be off !—the day is hot—I hate the heat.

The Bard of Avon—in this little book
 Which I am reading—speaks of you by name
 As fed by God¹. So now, to-day, go look
 To Heaven to satisfy your greedy claim !
 Come back to-morrow to this shady nook
 And I will feed you also, just the same.

¹ 'And He that doth the ravens feed,
 Yea, providently caters for the sparrow,
 Be comfort to my age !' *As You Like It*, Act ii, Scene 3.

II.

I am no miser: what is the expense?
 These *petits pains* which I purvey for you
 (One every morning) cost me each a *sou*:
 The price is high: but, generations hence,
 Bread will be cheaper: and what follows thence?
 Why, sparrows will of course be plentier! Whew!
 Ye then will darken every Paris rue
 And passage-way and kerb and tree and fence!

The *Figaro* predicts (from your increase)
 That by-and-by the people of the town—
 Under the leadership of the police—
 Will rise in majesty to put you down!
 But I, your poet, wish you years of peace—
 With, every year, a coat of richer brown.

III.

At least, your feathers would be brown if clean:
 But in the dusty streets ye prowl about,
 And pry in haunts where ashes are thrown out,
 Till ye are gray as mice: and I have seen—
 As here ye flit around me on the green—
 Your wings all powdered white:—a proof, no doubt,
 Of meal-bags plundered by your rabble rout
 Down at the *Magasin de la Marine*¹.

I used to fancy, when I was a lad,
 That if I sprinkled salt upon your tails,
 I then could catch you! But I grieve to add
 That every first ambition always fails:
 And this of mine, the first I ever had,
 Is not the chief that now my heart bewails!

IV.

I cannot see why people hate you so,
 Nor why your punishment should be condign!
 'Are not two sparrows' (saith the Book Divine)
 'Sold for a farthing?' This was long ago!
 But have ye now a market-value? No!
 Out of a hundred men, say ninety-nine
 Would spurn you as a gift! And some incline
 To villify you as they do the crow!

¹ This entrepôt of naval stores adjoins the Trocadéro-garden, and faces the *Ile des Cygnes* (or Isle of Swans).

I scorn the crow!—he has a coward's heart!
 'A man of straw' will fill him with affright!
 But no such pitiful device of art
 Can put your more courageous flock to flight!
 Not all the Anarchists of all Montmartre
 Have daunted you with all their dynamite!

V.

The Bourbons have been banished from the land;
 The Empire is a name, but not a power;
 A ministry may fall at any hour;
 But ye are such a bold and saucy band
 That even though your downfall has been planned
 (Like that of Monsieur Eiffel's ugly tower)
 Yet every park in Paris is your bower,
 And all the town is under your command!

In twenty great *arrondissements* ye reign—
 A hundred million little kings uncrowned—
 Each with the royal strut of Charlemagne!—
 And here your feathered squads will forage round
 Long after I, who pipe to you this strain,
 Shall move into my lodgings underground.

VI.

Though not aquatic, yet ye bathe for fun;—
 And if our Trocadéro fount be dry,
 Ye wait disconsolate until ye spy
 The waters loosened and allowed to run:
 For when the fount needs filling, it is done
 On strictly fiscal principles: and why?
 Because the only source of the supply
 Is public money—and there may be none!

I lately saw your footprints in the snow;—
 Yet seldom is a Paris frost so keen
 But that ye brave the coldest winds that blow,
 Nor does the winter make you thin and lean
 Like other beggars—for ye little know
 What such a word as poverty may mean.

VII.

Ye are not migratory: nor am I:
 For Paris is a place where I could stay—
 With calm content—for ever and a day!
 And, O ye sparrows, when I see you fly—

Not like the lark or eagle, mounting high—
 But low along the vulgar street and *quai*,
 Ye so resemble *me* that I may say
 Ye too are of the Earth, not of the Sky!

Strange that a Human Creature, born to soar,
 (For, like the sparrow, Man himself hath wings!)
 Should choose his home amid a city's roar,
 And fix his habitat with sordid things,
 And be a groundling (or but little more—
 As earthy as the Earth to which he clings!

VIII.

I am provoked at publicists who say
 That ye are 'good for nothing.' A decree
 Was once proposed by De La Bergerie
 To shoot you all! Then pious Poncelet
 Suggested poison as a better way!
 This modern monk inculcates (as we see)
 The same old sweet and Christian charity
 That lent a charm to Torquemada's day!

Now I, your friend, who would prevent your fall,
 Can prove that ye are useful in your sphere:
 Ye do what Caesar never did for Gaul:
 Ye catch and eat and cause to disappear
 Worms, grubs and caterpillars—say in all—
 Each bird alone—a cartload in a year!

IX.

How I would miss you from these Paris streets!
 And yet, ye mighty midgets, if expelled,
 Ye would return with insolence unquelled!
 Then all your public acrobatic feats,
 And all your private squabbles, grabs and cheats
 Would be renewed! Nor could they be excelled
 Save only in the sessions that are held
 When the Town Council¹ or the Chamber² meets!

Ye too hold parliaments. Your meeting-place
 (For state-affairs) is yonder ruined pile³
 Within whose walls the weeds—that grow apace—
 Bedeck your forum:—where, with jargon vile,
 Your total nation—your assembled race—
 Speak all at once—in ancient Roman style!

¹ Conseil Municipal.² Chambre des Députés.³ Cour des Comptes, destroyed by the Communists in 1871.

X.

Your favourite tit-bit is a *poire* or *pomme*
Or ripe *cérise*. Your whole *cohorte*
Is blamed because a few of you, for sport,
Rob orchards yonder—on the heights wherefrom
Ye once had many a bullet, many a bomb!
The Prussians now no longer 'hold the fort':
Your present foe is of another sort:
Ye sparrows, watch him!—for his name is Tom!

I give you warning—he can climb a tree,
Or pounce upon you from a tulip-bed;
(For, in his jumping, he excels a flea!)
He may be lurking nigh while ye are fed!
If so, ye nevermore shall need from me
So small a favour as a crumb of bread!

XI.

The robins love the meadow and the gorse,
But *ye* are loyal to the paving-stones:
No heavy omnibus can crush your bones:
Ye never are run over by a horse:
And though velocipedes are now a force
More terrible to face than kings and thrones,
Ye dodge them all: nor do ye ask who owns
A vacant lot—for it is yours of course.

Ye build in crannies, crevices and cracks,—
And all your nests are always out of sight:
Ye pay no window-rent nor water-tax—
(I wish that *my* assessments were so light!)
And though Parisian morals may be lax,
Ye never gad about the town at night.

XII.

Your sin is gluttony: ye stuff and cram!
What appetites! I offer you a swap:
Exchange with me, ye birds, your healthy crop
For this my poor disgruntled diaphragm!
My liver is as torpid as a clam—
While yours is over-active—like your hop!
Ye could devour, I think, a grocer's shop!
But woe is me!—a simple slice of ham—

Or just a lobster-salad, very plain—
 Or mere Welsh rabbit . . . permeates my breast
 With punitive and purgatorial pain,
 Till by my lightest lunch I am distrest
 So that I feel the tortures that pertain
 To realms infernal and to souls unblest!

XIII.

Now therefore, O ye sparrows, can it be
 That *your* Provider is the same as *mine*?
 Ye have capacity, I know, to dine
 A thousand times a day,—while *once*, for *me*,
 Is quite too much! Can nothing disagree
 With your digestion? No! Ye show no sign
 Of gastric torture in your chest and chine,
 Nor any trace of headache from a spree!

If Providence would let me make my choice
 Of Earth's best blessings for my days to come,—
 Would I, ye sparrows, ask to have your voice?
 Oh no! ye cannot sing—for ye are dumb!—
 But oh how mightily would I rejoice
 If I could have your undyspeptic *tum*!

JARDIN DU TROCADÉRO, *June*, 1893.

THE IMMORTALITY OF LOVE.

THE Heart is fickle. Who can tell
 When Love will flit away?
 The lover loveth long and well
 Who loveth for a day!

THE CHAMELEON'S DISH

A MODERN NORWEGIAN FANTASY

Founded on the Hopes and Illusions of Mankind

King. How fares our cousin Hamlet?

Hamlet. Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish: I eat the air,
promise-crammed: you cannot feed capons so.—*Act iii, Scene 2.*

Hamlet. 'By and by' is easily said.—*Act iii, Scene 3.*

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

(1894)

—•—

It is the good fortune of this Poem that its Shakespearean title is itself a poem.

In Shakespeare's time, the belief was common that the Chameleon fed on the Air.

Hence when the King of Denmark asks—

'How fares our cousin Hamlet?'

the Prince satirically replies—

'Excellent, I' faith; of the chameleon's dish: I eat the air, promise-crammed: you cannot feed capons so.'

Though Modern Science (which is steadily crumbling our pet illusions: has long since exploded the old and pretty notion of the chameleon's diet, yet down to this day, Hamlet's happy expression, 'the chameleon's dish,' remains one of those permanent and perfect phrases with which the greatest of authors has ornamented the noblest of languages.

By continuous currency for three hundred years, this expression has now become not only classic and venerable, but useful and indispensable; and to strike it from our present speech, or to relegate it to the limbo of the obsolete, would be to cast away a vital fragment of our mother-tongue.

A curious fact of Science, such as the strange digestion of the *Chamæleo bifurcus*, may receive—in successive ages—new glosses or interpretations from fresh discoveries; but a quaint turn of Fancy—such as a pat line of our old poetry—suffers no change in its transition to modern times.

A Shakespearean word may drift from its mediæval meaning; but a Shakespearean figure of speech remains for ever.

Hamlet's answer to the King has exactly the same purport now which it had at first.

Every credulous mortal who puts an over-eager faith in magnificent but illusory promises, too good to be true; in brilliant and flattering hopes, too grand to be fulfilled; in beautiful vagaries, tempting and plausible, but chimerical and vain; in theories Utopian—or in schemes Quixotic:—every dreamer of day-dreams—every dweller in cloudland—or every hero of the impossible—is fitly said to feed on the Chameleon's Dish—the Air.

As this fascinating habit is common to the human race, Hamlet's metaphor is of universal application: and the last (and least) of its uses is to furnish a fine title for this poem—a title better than the poem—and justified as the

aptest possible characterization of those unsubstantial and airy Hopes and Illusions which these pages are to chronicle and describe.

Perhaps under the good auspices of so suggestive a title—together with the help of the one strong moral of this tale—or rather of these many and diverse tales—all illustrating the folly of chasing mere bubbles and phantoms as the chief prizes of life—this poem may do something to remind our present hurrying, driving, and grasping generation

*'What shadows we are,
What shadows we pursue!'*

PARIS, January 15, 1894.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH EDITION

(1897)

This is a new and annotated edition, with a more explicit and descriptive title and sub-title, as follows :

THE CHAMELEON'S DISH

OR

CARL OLAF'S CANTICLE

A MODERN NORWEGIAN FANTASY

Consisting of a series of Monologues or Improvisations, recited at a Village-Festival in Norway, by a native Skald of the present day, to the musical accompaniment of his 'Kit' (or violin)—the whole chain of separate recitations forming a single and unbroken story—illustrating the Hopes, the Illusions, and the Disappointments of Mankind.

This poem—borrowing its title from Hamlet's designation of the thin and empty air—is meant to be a genial and wholesome satire on some of the false expectations, visionary ambitions, and foolish self-delusions of modern society;—including particularly the tempting and degrading fallacy that wealth and fashion constitute virtue and happiness;—a vulgar error more characteristic of our present and utilitarian age than of any former and sterner time—when the greed for riches, for titles, and for social pomp and glory was less possible of realization by the common people than now.

* * *

As the scene of this poem is laid in Norway, a few preliminary remarks on certain characteristics of that unique country—beginning with its phenomenal climate—will, I trust, be acceptable here.

* * *

By a law of Nature pertaining to all lands and latitudes, the Young see visions, and the Old dream dreams.

This castle-building habit of mind—or the instinct through which all men (as Dryden says) are 'fooled by hope'—is a much less itching and tormenting craze in the tropics and in languid climates than in the intermediate zones of trade and commerce; and it develops into its maddest freaks of extravagant expectation and chimerical fancy in the far North among the inhabitants of the Arctic Circle.

Certainly the two most credulous and gullible tribes of civilized men whom modern travellers ever visit are the Esquimaux and the Lapps: who, though no longer nomads, yet are to this day 'Children of Nature'—and who still implicitly believe whatever they see, hear, or dream.

Indeed, they are endowed with a brain wherein always 'the wish is father to the thought.'

This extreme credulity is from a climatic cause.

During seven months of every year, these wretched people suffer a terrible strain and pressure of cold, darkness, and privation.

Housed in their smoky huts like prisoners, and doomed for an apparently endless season to wait wistfully for their long-deferred relief, they are soothed meanwhile with but a single solace:

'The miserable have no other medicine but only hope!'

Finally, after their winter has worn away, and when their miraculous summer bursts upon them from the Underworld—bringing a day without a night—these sluggish hyperboreans receive (is it a fairy-gift?) a sudden pulse of madness into their hearts' blood; they see—for a while—nothing but the bright side of things; their life—for a brief season—is rose-coloured and unreal; and the wildest fancies creep into the thick skulls of the commonest louts.

No wonder, therefore, that the Finlanders—a splendid race—living in the latitude of the white bear, the seal, and the walrus—should have drawn their poetic inspiration, not from a far-off and Olympian Mount, but from their own familiar Northern and Auroral skies, and should consequently (in their *Kalevala*) have produced an epic which Max Müller ranks among the prime monuments of the literature of the whole world¹.

Though Carl Olaf, who chants the Canticle of 'The Chameleon's Dish,' is neither a Finlander, nor a Laplander, nor an Esquimaux, yet he is a native of that huge rough Scandinavian peninsula where the hyperborean climate—

¹ He groups his favourite primordial cluster of epics as follows:

1. The Homeric. *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.
2. The East Indian. *Mahabharata* and *Shahnamah*.
3. The Gothic. *Nibelunge*.
4. The Suomian (or Finnish). *Kalevala*.

with its tremendous change from winter to summer—carries the human mind with a prodigious swing from sullenness to gaiety—from sluggishness to ecstasy—from a long and irresistible melancholy bordering on despair to a sudden frenzied irrationality springing from the thrill of a new and stirring life.

Carl Olaf, as a Norwegian (sympathizing with his countrymen, and knowing how to criticize them without presumption or offence), addresses to their sober second thought—by means of this poem—a series of satirical moralizations, in which he attempts to utter, in light and easy verse, some of the same salutary truths which good old Dr. Samuel Johnson delivered in sonorous prose when he said :

'Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope,—who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow,—attend to the history of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia.'

Now it also happens that Carl Olaf's tale, though not of an 'Abyssinian Prince,' in a golden age, is nevertheless of a 'Happy Valley' in a golden summer.

This sequestered spot is known throughout the Strelsa Dal by the name of Nanna's Heim—and is also locally celebrated as Carl Olaf's native thorp—where the kit-playing Carl (who is the one and only 'skald' or bard of his 'ampt' or shire) enjoys the modest honour of such a limited laureateship as a dozen villages can join to confer upon him, without the addition of a 'pipe of canary.'

In his Canticle of 'The Chameleon's Dish'—which may be called many poems in one—he recites to his rustic constituency a series of improvised monologues—each separate, yet all connected—like beads on a thread;—thus massing together to the minds of his listeners an accumulated array of the most foolish fads ever invented by the human fancy;—inventions not his own, but borrowed by him for the occasion—some from one country, some from another;—chimeras and visionary hopes and impossible schemes which certain typical dunces of the Strelsa Dal (according to his narrative) are in the habit of there pursuing in sober earnest—before his own very eyes—at this very day—exactly as if the bubbles and phantoms of their pursuit were solid and attainable realities—actual prizes which they were hoping to win.

In other words, he speaks as if he had veritably met and talked with a number of deluded simpletons whose daily and only aim was to make a real—not a metaphorical—search for 'the philosopher's stone'—or for the 'elixir vitae'—or for 'the seven-leagued boots'—or for 'Aladdin's lamp'—or for 'the wishing-carpet of Tangoo'—or for 'the ship that is always coming home'—or for the 'singing tree,' which never is heard—or for 'St. Brandan's isle,' which never is seen—or for 'the sunshine in the sieve,' which never is caught.

These and other grand ambitions (I repeat) are cited by Carl Olaf as the actual present occupations of certain simple people in the Strelsa Dal whom

he has just lately seen engaged in pursuing them, and who have not yet once suspected that the things which they are grasping at are shadows of just the same deceptive sort as the image which Aesop's dog beheld in the brook!

Therefore 'The Chameleon's Dish' (which Carl Olaf provides as a 'Barmecide feast') is designed to be an *argumentum ad absurdum*—a logical attempt to deduce from the ridiculous fads and follies of a small thorp and valley the equally foolish (even if less ridiculous) greeds and ambitions of the 'madding crowd' throughout the great modern world.

In order, however, that the Carl may not be accused of lampooning his fellow-dalesmen, he borrows the silliest and most senseless of his illustrations, not from the serious talk of his sober-minded neighbours, but from the grotesque confessions of a chance company of hilarious foreigners who happen to be visiting the Strelsa Dal on a summer excursion.

Of course, Carl Olaf's motive in his rehearsal of all these symbols and emblems of things fatuous and impossible, is the high moral purpose of provoking his listeners (or readers) to ask and answer, each for himself, the self-searching question: 'Am I too, like these other fools, spending my *own* short life in just such a vanity of bubble-chasing? Am I too, in this same idiotic way, foredooming my own deluded self to just such a waste of my time, of my strength, and of my life!'

Meanwhile, in order that the naïve character of Carl Olaf's fellow-peasants of the Strelsa Dal—as he here depicts their extreme simplicity of mind and manners—may not be thought overdrawn, nor out of harmony with an age of steam and electricity, let 'The Chameleon's Dish' be here at once corroborated in advance by the high authority of Sir George Dasent, who says:

'The Dalesmen of Norway and Sweden may be reckoned among the most primitive examples of what is left of peasant-life.'

* * *

To this extract I will conveniently here add two or three other cognate paragraphs, on other points, and by other writers—touching Norwegian scenery, natural history, and current politics.

* * *

The 'Lemming' is alluded to in the Carl's Canticle. This little animal is such a stranger even to people who know his Norwegian cousin, the Rat, that the reader is entitled to the following scientific description by the distinguished naturalist, the Rev. J. G. Wood, who says:

'At uncertain and distant intervals of time, many of the Northern parts of Europe, such as Lapland, Norway, and Sweden, are subjected to a strange invasion. Hundreds of little, dark, mouselike animals sweep over the land, like clouds of locusts suddenly changed into quadrupeds; coming from some unknown home, and going no one knows whither. These creatures are the Lemmings, and their sudden appearances are so entirely mysterious that the Norwegians look upon them as having been rained from the clouds upon the earth. Driven onwards by some overpowering instinct, these vast hordes travel in a straight line, permitting nothing but a smooth perpendicular wall or rock to turn them from their course. If they should happen to meet with any living being, they immediately attack, knowing no fear, but only urged

by indiscriminate rage. Any river or lake they swim without hesitation, and rather seem to enjoy the water than to fear it. If a stack or a cornrick should stand in their path, they settle the matter by eating their way through it. The country over which they pass is utterly devastated by them. . . . These migrating hosts are accompanied by clouds of predacious birds, and by many predacious quadrupeds, who find a continual feast spread for them so long as the Lemmings are on their pilgrimage. The fish come in for *their* share of the banquet, and make great havoc in their columns. The reindeer is often seen in chase of the Lemmings. The termination of their extraordinary migrations is generally *in the sea*, where the survivors of the much-reduced ranks finally perish. It is fortunate for the country that these razzias only occur at rare intervals, a space of some ten or fifteen years generally elapsing between them. The Lemmings feed on grass, reeds, and lichens. They are obstinately savage creatures—swarming in the forest, sitting two or three on every stump, and biting the dogs' noses. The irritable little Lemmings will not permit a passenger to move by them, but boldly dispute the right of way, uttering little sharp squeaking barks.'

* * *

As to the depth of water in the Norwegian Fiords, the late Mr. Froude, the historian, who twice explored them in a private yacht, said :

'In Sogne Fiord, at a point far inland—a hundred miles from the sea—our soundings indicated 700 fathoms—or three-quarters of a mile; and we have to account for chasms which, if we add the depth of water to the heights of the mountains above it, are 9,000 feet from the bottom to the mountain-crest.

'We went up into the North Fiord—of all the Fiords the most beautiful. The cataracts were in their glory. I counted seventeen all close about us where we anchored. We landed for our frugal luncheon—dry biscuits and a whisky flask—but we sate in *a bed of whortleberries*, purple with ripe fruit, by a cascade which ran down out of a snowfield. . . .

'We brought back our basketfuls of trout; and Norwegian trout are the best in the world. . . .

'On a single cottage-roof you may see half a dozen trees growing ten or fifteen feet high. . . .

'The Norwegians depend for their existence on their sheep and cattle. Every particle of grass available for hay is secured; and grass, peculiarly nutritious, often grows on the high ridges, 2,000 feet up. This they save as they can, and they have original ways of doing it. In the Geiranger it is tied tightly in bundles and slung over the cliffs to be gathered up in boats below. But science, too, is making its way in this Northern wilderness. The farm-houses, for shelter's sake, are always at the bottom of valleys, and are generally near the sea. At one of our anchorages, shut in as usual among the mountains, we observed one evening from the deck what looked like a troop of green goats skipping and bounding down the cliffs. We discovered through a binocular that they were bundles of hay. The clever bönder had carried up a wire, like a telegraph wire, from his courtyard to a projecting point of mountain: on this ran iron rings as travellers, which brought the grass directly to his door. . . .

'The flowers everywhere were most beautiful; and the wild roses were the fullest, reddest, and most abundant that I had ever seen. . . .

'In the boats we sat, tormented by flies such as are seen nowhere but in Norway. There is one as big as a drone, and rather like one, but with a green head, and a pair of nippers in it that under a magnifying-glass are a wonder to look at. This, I suppose, is the wretch described by "Three in Norway," who speak of a fly that takes a piece out of you, and flies to the next rock to eat it.'

* * *

Carl Olaf's '*kitt*' (or fiddle) cannot be heard in these pages, but must be imagined as assisting the words, and especially as enlivening the interludes. The '*kit*' is the national musical instrument of Norway. The skill and genius of Ole Bull inspired Longfellow to pay the following tribute to the greatest of Norwegian violinists:

'And when he played, the atmosphere
Was filled with magic, and the ear
Caught echoes of that Harp of Gold
Whose music had so weird a sound,
The hunted stag forgot to bound,
The leaping rivulet backward rolled,
The birds came down from bush and tree,
The dead came from beneath the sea,—
The maiden to the harper's knee!'

* * *

A village-festival in Norway will sometimes last for a week;—fifteen or twenty *thorps* uniting at one place;—for instance this year at Strevven. next year at Klapperpad, then at Klaybers, and so on until every *thorp* in the *ampt* has its turn. These *fêtes* consist of a variety of sports—such as foot-racing, pole-climbing, water-carrying, pig-chasing, archery, swimming, cow-milking—and other competitive trials for prizes. It is during the intervals between these competitive exercises—and generally after the close of the day—in the long and bright twilight—that the village-minstrel gets a hearing for his '*kit*' and for his rhyme.

At one of these festivals Carl Olaf, not in his own '*thorp*' of Nanna's Heim, but in his own '*ampt*' of Strelsa Dal, delivers the accompanying monologues.

* * *

It will be seen at a glance that the Carl, in his improvisations to an audience of his own countrymen—who are proud of their Gothic past and of their Eddaic lore—must indulge in a free use of the Old Norse mythology. If he should forget to name Thor and Odin, and especially if he should slight Balder and Nanna, he would not be loyal to his traditions. Of course, his allusions to the Scandinavian mythology are somewhat puzzling to the ordinary English reader. Nevertheless, a clever little plan has been here hit upon in laying the Carl's lucubrations before a more Western public. Each stave or monologue of the Carl's Canticle is here preceded by a few words explaining, in advance, each Old Norse allusion which the reader will encounter in the text.

* * *

As to Norwegian politics, let me say first that the '*Golden Lion*,' to which Carl Olaf alludes, is a heraldic emblem on the Norwegian flag, and is reproduced everywhere on the public buildings and escutcheons throughout Norway.

It was originally meant to be a Christian symbol; and accordingly the Lion is wielding with his paws the Sacred Axe of St. Olaf, who was the Christian King of Norway in the eleventh century, and who—in introducing

Christianity into his kingdom—was in the habit of going in person into the pagan temples, and hewing down with his own hands the Heathen Gods.

But the Golden Lion is now a mere political emblem, whereby the Norwegians express their own separate nationality as distinct from that of Sweden—just as the Hungarians maintain their own national symbol, though Hungary is an annex of Austria.

Norway and Sweden are two nations under one crown : but Sweden wears the crown : and hence Norway is restive : so that the present political union between the two countries—though it dates back to 1814, and is therefore three-quarters of a century old—has nevertheless during the past few years become repugnant to a growing Norwegian party who now at last desire a separation.

The controversy is complicated—the details being many—but the underlying principle is simple.

The quaint and shrewd remark of Abraham Lincoln that 'God never made a man wise enough to govern a people against their own consent,' applies to King Oscar II, the present sovereign of the joint kingdoms of Norway and Sweden: a King who, though able, cultivated, and upright, has the misfortune to reign at a time when fully a third—or perhaps even a half—of his so-called 'subjects' have already outgrown 'the monarchic principle.'

In other words, many of the Swedes, and most of the Norwegians, are now Republicans at heart.

In Norway, in particular, the spirit of democratic liberty—which is natural in a mountainous country—is as rife as in Switzerland: and accordingly Norway is likely, in the near future, to become, not only geographically, but also politically, the 'Switzerland of the North.'

Therefore the political allusions in this poem will not, I hope, be regarded as ungracious; for of course I could not truthfully portray the thoughts and feelings of a Norwegian peasant, and particularly of a peasant-bard, and at the same time omit his aspirations for national independence.

* * *

Moreover, not only from a political, but also from a literary, point of view, the present attitude of Norway is independent and commanding—as the following anecdote will illustrate:

One afternoon in August, 1893, in company with a seaside party of journalists, I witnessed from the jetty at Tréport (on the English Channel) the incoming of a Norwegian ship from Gibraltar. 'Is it not odd,' asked one of the spectators, 'that Odin's Vikings should now be hailing from the Pillars of Hercules?' 'Not so,' replied another, 'for the Pillars of Hercules are now Ibsen and Björnson!'

* * *

And now, reverting once more to 'The Chameleon's Dish'—concerning which a final word remains to be said—I will say it by means of an illustration.

* * *

A noticeable freak of Nature is witnessed in the northern part of the Scandinavian peninsula. Travellers in that region observe with surprise that every green leaf with which they are most familiar in their own country—say a leaf of the oak, or of the maple, or of the elm—grows to a larger size in Finmark than at home. In fact, every vernal sprout or shoot that comes under the spell of the Midnight Sun is of abnormal length.

So too is this poem!

And yet, how could it be otherwise?

It is a poem which—as already explained—is to be read between the lines: it is one thing on the surface, and another at the core: it tells its story, not for the sake of the fable, but of the moral. The device is old, for Spenser adopted the same subterfuge in *The Faery Queen*: although the queen whom he meant was no fairy; for she was Elizabeth.

In 'The Chameleon's Dish,' in like manner, two poems go forward in the text of *one*.

There is also a *third* series of parallels or analogies running throughout the Carl's improvisations: for the careful reader will of course observe that the whole round of human life—including all the separate segments of the circle—namely, infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, old age, and death—all these, each in turn (with close exactitude) are symbolized in this poem by a corresponding stage of the sun's journey through a single day—namely, dawn, morning, forenoon, noon, afternoon, and dusk.

Carl Olaf's Canticle, on the surface, is a mere idyllic or pastoral tale—bearing no semblance to a satire, and giving no threat of a moral.

Nevertheless, the one and only object which the Carl has in view in reciting his monologues is satirical: though the satire is always by inference: it cuts and heals by what the surgeons call 'secondary intention.'

But, of course, 'The Chameleon's Dish' has a *first* intention.

And what is this?

I have already said that the one, main, chief and only object of this poem is to point out certain of the perils which are now threatening our modern life and society:—such as (to cite a few instances) the universal greed of gold—the general perfidy of love—the frequent bigotry of religion—the unpardonable wickedness of war—the pretentious mockery and audacious fraud of monarchy—the unnatural 'grind' of business—the premature shortening of life—and the great scarcity of that uncommon wisdom which is strangely misnamed 'common sense.'

Now a poem which undertakes to moralize on such a multitude of points as these is necessarily what the etymologists call a 'long satire'—that is to say, a veritable '*satura lanx*,'¹ which means a 'full dish.'

So 'The Chameleon's Dish' is full.

And yet, full of what?

Why, of the thin air!—that is, of nothing at all!

So let the merry reader have his grinning jest—in which, of course, the

¹ Skeat's note on the word 'satire' says: 'The word means a *medley*, and is derived from *satura lanx*, a full dish, a dish filled with mixed ingredients; *satura* being the feminine of *satur*, full, akin to *satis*, enough, and to *satiare*, to satiate.'

author grimly joins—namely, that 'The Chameleon's Dish,' in its summation of things disappointing, ought to include its own self as an apt—perhaps as the crowning—illustration of its own theme!

And yet the plan of this poem—mark! I say the plan, and not the poetry—is as simple as the easiest moral lesson in Mother Goose.

What is the plan?

It is this.

A Norwegian skald, who is bent on learning a true philosophy of life, goes roaming through his native valley asking everybody whom he meets the following bewildering question:—

What is the best and worthiest aim to which a mortal man—during his brief earthly life—can judiciously dedicate his thoughts, his days, and his endeavours?

This wise question—and the foolish answers which it elicits—constitute the poem: a poem setting forth—by a kaleidoscopic and unexpected variety of emblems and instances—the appalling proof that the mass of mankind, by a natural infirmity of judgement, are addicted almost inevitably to the habit of making an unwise choice of their chief object and aim in life, and that therefore their earthly hopes are sure to be stricken at their highest outreach—like birds whom the fatal arrow pierces in the midmost heaven.

Such—and so simple—is the plan: such—and so useful—is the moral of 'The Chameleon's Dish, or Carl Olaf's Canticle.'

Accordingly, by reason of the simplicity of this plan, and of the usefulness of this moral, those rare and exceptional readers who love (as I have said) to 'read between the lines'—who are fond of guessing at hidden meanings—who pass with a clever jump from the sign to the thing signified—must certainly see in 'The Chameleon's Dish,' not a mere long, loose chain of 'airy nothings,' but a continuous and solemn protest against the one chief and imminent danger which imperils our modern civilization;—the same old danger which in ancient ages was called 'the accursed thirst of gold' (*auri sacra fames*), a passion which, with its pernicious consequences (and they are legion!) has always wrought—as nothing else in the world has done—the general corruption of mankind, bringing a poisonous mildew on church and state, on man and woman, on morals and manners, on literature, on art, and on the public tastes; a passion which is now more mischievous than ever before, because its opportunities of activity and success are no longer restricted (as they once were) to the feudal and hereditary 'upper classes,' but are now everywhere open to the low, the vulgar, and the vicious; a passion which therefore engenders in every large city a small set of parvenus—a self-elected few—who, affecting a social nobility to which they were not born, make up for this congenital deficiency by contriving to get themselves ostensibly linked, tied, hitched, bound, fastened or mystically attached—by means of 'a rope of sand'—to an imaginary aristocracy known in fiction as 'Our Best Society.'

The question therefore arises, Of what formative or organic elements is 'Our Best Society' composed?

I answer, that its basis is wealth—its object is vain-glory—its law is

exclusiveness—its spirit is feudal and offensive—its taste is odious and demi-mondaine—and its present despicable ambition is to degrade the American name in the eyes of the Old World.

How, then, shall 'Our Best Society'—Heaven save the mark!—be put to shame?

Shall it be satirized?

Certainly!

But there are all sorts of satires. For instance, there are satires that 'throw mud,' and are meant for vilification; there are satires that crack jokes, and are meant for jest and ridicule; there are satires that sting and wound, and are made up of poison, hatred and revenge; there are satires pessimistic, depreciating the green earth, and discontenting its human inhabitants with their beautiful home; and there are even satires impious and blasphemous, complaining of God's plan of governing the world.

Now 'The Chameleon's Dish' is no such satire as any of these: it deals neither in abuse nor invective—neither in quip nor innuendo; it gives no stabs; it perpetuates no hatreds; it makes no fling at the venerable past: it offers no insult either to God or to Nature; it does not call the universe a failure, nor life a calamity; and though the scene of this querulous poem is Arctic and hyperborean, yet the verses nowhere 'speak disrespectfully of the Equator.'

Among satirical moralizations of the non-abusive sort, I call to mind no finer specimen than Shakespeare has put into the mouth of 'the melancholy Jacques' in *As You Like It*:—

'All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man, in his time, plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel,
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woful ballad,
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.'

Act ii, Scene 7.

How shrewd, how keen, how penetrating! And yet, how humane! Verily the 'melancholy Jacques' is a satirist of the non-biting, non-blistering order! Observe the extreme gentleness of his savagery! He has his sling at everybody, and yet he carps at nobody. On the one hand, he spares neither the fretful babe, nor the truant school-boy, nor the sonneteering lover, nor the swearing soldier, nor the fat justice, nor the lean senex, nor the final imbecile—and yet, on the other hand, in all this delicious diatribe there is not a word of vituperation!—not a morbid reflection!—not a cynical sneer! This noble soliloquy confirms Coleridge's theory that Shakespeare's supreme gift was not rhetoric but judgement. The great bard judged too wisely of life to say with Lord Beaconsfield, 'Youth is a blunder, Manhood a struggle, and Old Age a regret.' This is exactly what Shakespeare—throughout his whole description of Man's Seven Ages—has forborne to say!

* * *

Finally, the high purport of a moralizing poem ought to be to create within the mind and heart of a candid reader what Wordsworth, in *Tintern Abbey*, calls —

'That blessed mood
In which the burden of the mystery,—
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lightened.'

This mood of mind and heart—a mood which some persons undervalue and call 'day-dreaming'—but which others more wisely dignify as 'philosophic reflection,' or as 'moral meditation,' or as 'spiritual longing':—this infrequent mood—in these utilitarian times—is of course not dominant with the many, albeit delightful to the few.

Perhaps, therefore, among these few—(or possibly at least among a few of these few!)—'The Chameleon's Dish, or Carl Olaf's Canticle' may not be denied a hearing, nor be deemed unworthy of a welcome.

DEDICATION.

*THIS gift, O Lady, which I offer thee,
 Though slight it be,
 Is for a service which no gift, though great,
 Could compensate:*

*One night, when I lay gasping for my breath,
 The Angel of Death,—
 Whom men call Azrael,—(Terror of the Land!)—
 Came, dart in hand,
 And stood beside my bed, and called my name,
 And took his aim,—
 As if to bring me, with a single thrust,
 To bite the dust!*

*Moreover, with his weapon dire, he brought,—
 With grim forethought!—
 Some snow-white linen,—which, as he avowed,
 Was for my shroud!—
 And also,—to my horrible surprise!—
 Coins for my eyes!—
 And candles to be lighted round my head!—
 As for the dead!*

*'Then why, O murderous Azrael,' whispered I,
 'Do I not die?'*

*'Because,' quoth he, 'a woman hath come here
 To interfere,
 Who watches me with such a wary gaze
 That when I raise
 My never-failing shaft,—elsewhere so keen,—
 She springs between!—
 And makes herself a barrier to the blow!—
 And hence I know
 That here I come untimely, and in vain;—
 Nor can remain;—
 For since she thus keeps warding off my dart,
 I must depart!'*

*Depart he did!—And I was spared the tomb!
 —And all through whom?
 —Oh would I had some better gift for thee!—
 For thou art she!*

*Stave First.**THE ARCTIC ARCADIA,*

OR THE LAND OF BALDER AND NANNA.

THOUGH the four Scandinavian countries—namely, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland—are all within the Christian pale, yet a few of their ancient pagan gods and goddesses (especially Balder and Nanna) are still cherished in Norseland.

'Balder the Beautiful'—and Nanna his bride—are impersonations of the brief northern summer.

And such a summer!

Yachts that sail on July evenings across the Skaggerack, from the Skaw to the Naze—or (in other words) from Denmark to Norway—find that the night is but a luminous twilight interposed between two dawns.

At Lake Wener—which is in Sweden—the waterfowl, during the hot weather, forget to roost at nightfall (there being too little dusk to tempt them to their nests).

At Cape North—on the Finmark coast—there are eight weeks during which the sun does not set at all, but remains above the horizon at midnight.

It is in this sunshiny season that the god Balder, in flowery splendour, is fabled to arrive in the North, in order to wed his long-betrothed bride, Nanna; a ceremony which he repeats with her year by year.

Balder comes annually in June or July.

Nanna is then impatiently waiting for him, proudly employing herself, meanwhile, in embroidering her bridal-robe with her own hands;—a kind of royal needlework which was anciently deemed an elegant pastime for a queen, and for which a celestial precedent was set on Mount Olympus, where Minerva (with the help of the Graces) made for the Greek goddesses their magnificent robes.

Always the god Balder, in a month or two after his honeymoon—or sometimes in the very midst of it—is annually slain by his own blind brother Höder, the god of winter.

This fore-ordained deed of supreme evil is instigated by Loki, the Norse Satan or Devil, who craftily persuades the unsuspecting Höder to throw at Balder a fatal shaft made from the mistletoe—a weapon which, when sent whizzing at the summer-god, pricks him to the heart and gives him his death-wound.

The Druids of Gaul held the mistletoe to be sacred; and the maids of England and Yankeeland are kissed by their lovers under a branch of it; but the Norse bards call it a plant of ill-omen; for while the mistletoe blooms, the summer fades—and thus the poor shrub has to bear the blame of Balder's death and of Nanna's grief.

According to the Eddaic (or earliest Norse) songs, it is in the midst of splendid sports in Glisir Grove (or the playground of the gods in Asgard) that the mistletoe is flung at Balder.

On his assassination, a cry goes up through all Nature, 'Balder the Beautiful is dead!'

He then has a funeral-pyre of great splendour, in the form of a burning ship.

Nanna his wife, thus early widowed, weeps like Niobe, and will mourn for Balder during all the long winter—a fierce season of seven or eight blustering and frost-biting months.

Her divine mate will then re-arise from the nether world, re-appear in Norway, re-marry Nanna, and re-govern the North.

I.

BEGIRT by Norsk and piny hills,
 And interspersed with tumbling rills
 Whose torrents are of melted snow,
 There is a Valley that I know
 Where herds of reindeer browse,
 And troops of gay and barefoot maids
 Go singing through the salty glades,
 Jingling their pails at milking-time
 To greet the far-off tinkling chime
 Of home-returning cows.

II.

But let these merry maidens skip along
 Nor loiter here in this my solemn song ;
 For though their eyes be blue,
 And though their cheeks be fair,
 And though their heads have each a triple tress
 Of golden hair,
 And though these damsels be as sweet and true
 As any mortal maids for men to woo,
 Yet I at once confess
 That this my Lay has nought to do
 With any lass of all the crew.

III.

I chant no madrigal of Love :
 Full many a better bard indeed
 Has piped upon that ancient reed.
 But I shall do a different thing :
 This theme of mine must mount above
 The puny flight of Cupid's wing :
 For what I now intend to sing
 Forth-reaches to the furthest range
 Of things most mystical and strange ;—
 Not things that *are*, but things that *seem* :—
 And which no bard before
 Has ventured to explore ;
 Not things behind us in the past,
 And which are sunk in Lethé's ooze,
 And lost to man's remembrance,—nay,
 Not these !—but let my lilting lay
 Look forward unto things beyond,
 And which, though not as yet in sight
 Man evermore
 Keeps wishing for—
 (Since wishing is his heart's delight :)

So let my screed
 Set forth the greed
 Wherewith he hopes to clutch and hold
 Things of to-morrow, not to-day—
 And therefore beautiful and bright :
 For things *to come* are fairer far
 Than things that *were*, or things that *are*.

IV.

So strange a theme
 I never thought to choose :
 It came unchosen—as a vision may,
 That warns and disappears :
 Yet this my song is not an evil dream :
 Nor does it augur dangers manifold
 Such as anointed seers,
 Foreseeing, have foretold :
 Though, lest my fancy should be overbold,
 Instruct me, O thou Arctic Muse !—
 Who in the lore of runes art wise ;
 Who in the days of old
 A runic rhyme didst not despise ;
 And who art gracious still to invocations
 From all the bards in Odin's fourfold nations :—
 Nations of Northern mould,
 Polar and bleak and lonely,
 Which not Apollo and his Nine
 Have seen or known,
 But which, O Arctic Muse, are thine—
 Thine ever and thine only ;
 Yea, thine to-day as thine of yore,
 The whole quaternion¹, sea and shore !

V.

For thou dost still on mighty wing arise
 Where Hecla heaves her cinders to the skies
 And Geysers leap
 And Glaciers glide into the seas,
 Chilling the Winds. And thou dost choose from these
 A frosty breeze
 Whose bite is stinging ;
 And thence in Freyia's² feather-guise
 Of plumage pure and cold

¹ The 'quaternion' consists of the four nations, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland.

² Freyia was the Norsk Venus, or goddess of love ; and Freyia's 'feather-guise' was a swan's or an eagle's plumage, which the goddess wore when she wished to hide her identity.

Dost rush to wreak thy wintry will
 On Wener's waters till they freeze ;—
 And thence from snowy hill to hill,
 From icy wold to wold,
 Thou fliest softly to the Cattegat
 Where never halcyon sat
 Save thee, to lull a wave to sleep ;—
 And thou dost still—in time of fog and thaw—
 With drabbled feather sweep
 To haunts of thine upon the Skaw,
 Where murky vapours creep
 With murrain to the sheep ;—
 And thou dost still—on Balder's shining days—
 Love better yet, and ever best of all,
 My native Norway, with her ocean-wall,
 Her billow-beaten Naze¹,
 Her precipices sheer and steep,
 Her fiords a thousand fathoms deep²,
 And all her hills which many a Jotun's hand³
 Hath flung together in a heap—
 That Freedom there may make a stand—
 For there indeed, as Guardian of the Land,
 Full soon may Freedom have a watch to keep !

VI.

Meanwhile, since jealous Peace as yet abides
 On all our goat-benibbled mountain-sides,
 Where Freedom loves to sit,
 I now will tune my kit
 And as a Norsker vaunt my boast
 That nowhere else on Odin's coast—
 With all its twenty thousand bays
 And grass-embroidered water-ways—
 Can any other glen or vale be seen
 That rivals mine in Nature's gift of green.

VII.

For there, throughout the whole year round,
 The moss enamels all the ground,
 And there the Arctic lichens grow⁴,

¹ The Naze is a sea-washed promontory at the extreme southern point of the Norwegian coast. Opposite to the Naze, and across the Skaggerack, is the Skaw, or the extreme Northern point of Denmark.

² For instance, Sogne Fiord has already been sounded to a depth of 4,000 feet; and in many places, not yet sounded, the water may be deeper still.

³ The Jotuns (pronounced Yotuns) were the primitive frost-giants—the earliest created beings on earth.

⁴ It is on these lichens that the reindeer feeds.

And there the mystic mistletoe
 With magic charm
 Protects from harm
 The peasant and his hut and farm,
 And yet presages Balder's woe.

VIII.

And so the bards of Balder's clime
 Have named—in honour of his Queen—
 This blooming valley Nanna's Heim :
 For though it be a Boreal place,
 Yet thither Balder's spouse—
 The goddess of all earthly grace¹—
 True to her nuptial vows
 (The faithfulest of wives, I ween !)
 Goes in the Spring of every year
 To weave afresh her wedding-gear,
 And there she weds her Royal Lord anew
 And there she dwells with him a Summer's space,
 (For it is fated that the two
 Be parted all the Winter through.)

IX.

O verdant Valley ! joy of June !
 (Where Nanna spends her honeymoon)
 Thy Summer vanishes too soon ;
 Yet, while its fleeting glory lingers,
 No Tropic turf in all the globe
 Vies with the velvet of the robe
 Woven by Northern Nanna's fingers !

 And I proclaim
 In Nanna's name
 That when the Eden of the days of yore
 Shall come to bloom upon the Earth once more
 (For so on every plain and hill
 It must and will),
 The universal verdure then
 Will simply be the same as when—
 Throughout the re-awakened North—
 The word of joy goes wildly forth
 That Balder weds his wife agen²,
 Whose bridal-robe is of a hue
 So green that it is almost blue.

¹ Nanna was born of a bud.

² The old spelling (*agen* instead of *again*) is here resumed—as explained in the Preface.

x.

—Here pause, O thou my lay!
 Hush thee awhile, and let not Nanna know
 On this her wedding-day
 That the swift dart of mistletoe
 Which Höder has let fly,—
 Winged with the winter-wind,—is on its way,—
 Coming from far yet speeding nigh
 To pierce the bridegroom By-and-By.

Stave Second.

THE BEST OF WORLDS,

OR THE GREEN EARTH BETTER THAN VALHAL.

IN the Odinic myths, the gods are called Asas; and hence the Norse Olympus is Asgard, or 'The Garden of the Gods'; but inasmuch as Odin's chief palace in Heaven is known as Valhal, the term Valhal is a Norse title for Heaven itself.

The three Norns, or Weird Sisters, are the Fates.

They are superior in authority to the gods, and are in many respects (though not in all) identical with the Latin *Parcae*: the two trinities differ not merely in their names, but somewhat in their offices or functions.

Thus the three *Parcae* are called Clotho or Birth, Lachesis or Life, and Atropos or Death.

The three Norns are Urd or the Past, Verdandi or the Present, and Skuld or the Future.

It is the duty of the Norns to keep watch of the sacred well called the Urdar fount, at the brink of which, and under a spreading bough of the Tree Ygdrasil, the Norse gods meet in daily council.

Urd, the eldest Norn (from whom the fount is named), possesses the wisdom of past experience; Verdandi, the next in age, is consulted as to current affairs; and Skuld, the youngest, has the supreme gift of foretelling future events.

After the Norns have decreed the sudden death of a living man, he is sometimes supernaturally forewarned of his approaching doom by a special premonitory sign.

For example, in walking across a field, or on entering a forest, he is made to see—in broad daylight—an ominous vision of a Phantom Ox, or of a White Wolf.

Either of these spectres is such a terror to the superstitious peasantry of the Strelsa Dal, that the stoutest and healthiest ploughman or woodcutter who happens, while looking up from his work, to catch a glimpse of either of these ghostly animals gliding over the ground, immediately throws down his axe or spade or pruning-knife, and hies him home to his family with all speed so as to die in his bed—for he knows that his death-hour is at hand.

I.

Now listen to a tale
 Of my Norwegian vale—
 The sunny Vale of Nanna's Heim—
 Where I was born,

And where (a lazy youth) I dwelt
And loved to roam and learned to rhyme,
And where (to pass away the time)
I sang of all I saw and felt—
Until the very longest days
Were cut the shorter by my lays.

II.

There, in my native cot
(A humble one, God wot !
The humblest on the mountain-belt),
One summer morn,
Before as yet a wakeful bird
In any nest had peeped or stirred,
I rose so early from my bed,
That when I knelt and bowed my head
The skies received my matin-prayer
Ere any sign of morn was there :
The East had not a ray of red ;
But fiery Mars
And other stars
Were lingering still in flaming sight
As loth to pale and take their flight ;
And all around me everywhere
That ghostly, furtive stillness lay
Which haunts the final hour of night,
To hie away
At dawn of day.

III.

It was the hour
When bud and flower,—
In recompense for lustres which they lose
By nightly obscuration of their hues,—
Receive a double fragrance from the night-long dews.

IV.

Their odours, now supremely sweet,
Were wafted to my window-seat—
Where down I sat
And where I slid the slat
And pushed away the vines, to greet
(When it should come) the first forewarning
That faintly steals
On eyes that wait the chariot-wheels
And golden-footed hoofs of morning.

V.

Apollo's steeds, though thorough-paced,
 Made little haste :
 They were so slow that as I waited
 They seemed belated :
 Aurora, though she bears a brand,
 Had not yet brought it in her hand.

VI.

All Nature, after all the light
 Of all her longest summer-day¹
 (And like a child worn out with play,
 Whose sleepy head
 Is heavier than a lump of lead,
 Now in the dearest slumber lay !
 In all the outdoor solitude
 The stillness was complete :—
 There was no breath of wind to stir
 A pine or fir ;
 No owl to-whitted or to-whoood ;
 No lynx's whelp
 Gave any yelp ;
 No dog barked in the village street :—
 In all the house
 No gadding mouse
 Made any patter with his feet ;
 Even the very cricket slept,—
 And I alone a vigil kept.

VII.

The hush grew more and more profound
 Till on my listening ear
 There stole a faint and tiny sound—
 Weird, muffled, strangely near ;
 And oh, most magical to hear !
 It was my heart ! I heard it beat !—
 The throb was such a thrilling bound,
 So full of health and vital heat,
 That all my body, through and through,
 Tingled at every breath I drew !

VIII.

At first I counted each pulsation—
 Till every nerve within me woke

¹ In the latitude of Nanna's Heim, a June day has about nineteen hours of daylight.

And quivered to the quivering stroke;
And ever as my keen delight
Kept mounting to a higher height
I said, 'Oh smite me still
With greater throb and fiercer thrill,
And wreak upon me all thy will!'

And every stroke would re-commence
With vigour more and more intense,
More ravishing to soul and sense—
Till I, half mad (or quite)
From such a wild exhilaration
(That made my poor and thatched retreat
A more than palace to my sight)
Now felt that just to breathe and *be*
Was ecstasy!
—For Life appeared divinely sweet!

IX.

Still, hardly daring to rejoice
Lest I should find my joy too fleet
(A pleasure that had come to stay
Not for a day,
Not for an hour),
I sprang upon my jocund feet
And gathered up my dumb-struck voice,
And half in whisper, half aloud,
I said, 'O God, were I endowed
For just the length of one long breath
With Thy immeasurable might—
If just a moment were my own
To speak a mandate from Thy Throne—
Thy voice to me thus lent
Should instantly be spent
To countervail my dismal doom of death—
A doom which I would straightway undecree!

X.

"'Ye fatal Sisters Three"
(Thus would I haste to say)
"Your killing edict I reverse!
Cut ye no thread for me!
Spin me no shroud!
Weave me no winding-sheet!
Plume me no hearse!
Dig me no mouldy bed!"

Plant me no yew above my head
 To whisper with a windy sigh
 And say to every passer-by
 'Here lies a loathsome thing of clay—
 A mortal dead !'
 Nay, O ye Trine, who arbitrate
 On every mortal creature's fate,
 I charge it on ye as your trust,
 Keep me exempt from Death and Dust !''

XI.

Then with a throbbing brain
 (That seemed to split with pain)
 How can a living man, thought I,
 But dread to die ?
 —Would that my mortal days, when done,
 Might here on earth be re-begun
 And lived agen for seven times seven,
 Rather than bartered once for Heaven !

XII.

And if the choice of worlds were mine,—
 If on some glorious morn
 The Third and Wisest Norn
 (The furthest-seeing of the Trine)
 Should come in majesty and say to me,
 'A boon is offered thee—
 The right is thine
 To choose the world wherein thou art to dwell—
 Take either of the Three,
 The Earth, or Heaven, or Hell—
 Choose freely as thy spirit may incline—
 Elect, if so thou wilt, to tarry *here*—
 Here ever, endlessly, from year to year—
 Here where these crags of spar and syenite
 Frown from their awful height
 Down sheerly on the sea-bombarded shore :'

XIII.

Oh if some high angelic voice
 Should with an accent strong and clear
 Call out and offer me this choice,—
 Then by the dozen Gods—or by a score,
 Or by a hundred more,—
 However rash, however strange
 My paltry preference may appear,
 My answer would be this :

XIV.

'Thou gracious sprite,
 Be Asgard all for thee!
 Let all its heavenly joys be thine!
 But as for me,
 Oh let the world I have, continue to be mine!
 For if my choice be free
 I never, never will resign
 Nor quit, nor part with, nor exchange
 This bright and bosky earthly sphere
 For such a dim unearthly strand
 As Pluto's shadowy port,
 Where souls of men are loth to land;
 Nor for the undiscovered hill
 Where Jove, if he be reigning still,
 Holds his Olympian Court;
 Nor for the fabled heavenly plain
 Where Odin's mortal heroes, slain,
 Immortally resort;
 Nor for the feigned Celestial City,
 Whose gates of pearl and streets of gold
 The dreamy Patmian thought he spied¹,
 And babbled of (for he was old),
 Yet which since then (oh, more's the pity!)
 No other mortal man beside
 Has been permitted to behold!'

XV.

—And now, oh pause agen, my song!
 —Of what avail
 Is this my tale
 That grows already dull and long
 Ere yet a tithe of it be told?
 The White Wolf waiteth for me on the wold—
 Whose breath is cold—
 Colder than winter's wind upon the snow:
 How can I know
 If he will wait until I end my lay?
 —So let me drop it now! But nay,
 On with the rhyme
 While there is time!—
 Ere yet the White Wolf creepeth nigh
 To hush the rhymer By-and-By.

¹ According to Christian tradition, St. John saw his vision of the New Jerusalem in his hundredth year while he was waiting for his death, which occurred soon afterward on the Isle of Patmos—or, as some say, in the desert.

Stave Third.

THE WISH OF THE WISE,

OR WHAT IS THE WORTHIEST OBJECT OF HUMAN
ENDEAVOUR?

CARL OLAF, in proceeding with his Canticle, boasts of his birthplace.

This is the thorp of Nanna's Heim—famous for its peculiar type of green moss bearing a red blossom. This mottled moss of the Strelsa Dal is supposed by the peasants to indicate unmistakably that their own velvety glen is the identical spot where the goddess Nanna awaits the god Balder, and where her yearly re-marriage to him takes place, every June or July.

'The Wild Mountains of Jotunheim' borrow their soubriquet from the ancient Eddaic Jotuns, or primeval Frost-giants.

Bragi was the special Norse god who (under Odin) was the chief patron of Poetry—and hence the Skalds are known as Bragimen.

Glafir Grove—the playground of the gods—lay adjacent to Valhal, the palace of Odin.

A Valkyr (or Valkyrie) was a winged spirit who hovered over earthly battle-fields in order to bear the souls of the slain to Heaven.

A Vala was an inspired prophetess—who, both before and after her death, might be consulted as an oracle.

A Van was a sea-god.

I.

So from my window peering forth,
And seeing in the dusky North
The darksome mountain-tops, I said :

II.

'Though God Himself were dead,
And though His Heavens were rolled away,
Yet still for me there would remain
The green-enamelled Earth instead,—
Which is so fair
That I declare
(Hear it, ye spirits of the air
And of the forest wild !)
This glorious globe of hill and plain,
Of land and sea,
Is more to me
Than aught which all the whole domain
Of all the highest Heavens can be !

III.

'So, since I love thee well, O Earth,'
Said I, 'now therefore, as thy filial child
(Born with a right to be maternally caressed
And by my Mighty Mother to be loved and blest'),
I make to Thee my heart's supreme request ;

Yet not with supplicating tone
 Nor plaintive cry
 Nor sob nor sigh
 Nor bending of my knee
 Nor beating of my breast !
 The Heavens are prayed to, every day,
 With tear and groan
 And head low-bowed :
 But this my prayer shall be addressed,
 O Earth, to thee alone ;
 And with my head uplift,
 For I am proud !
 I ask thee boldly for a gift—
 Deny not my behest !
 —In every clime, in every zone,
 Thou hidest underneath thy vest—
 Deep down within thy girth—
 No end of treasures still unknown,
 Which all belong to thee !

IV.

'So, O thou generous Mother Earth,
 Now listen to my daring plea—
 Enrich me with thy best !
 Grant me thy very dearest boon,
 Thy gift of most exceeding worth !
 And if thou grant it, grant it soon ;
 That, as my days are but a span,
 I may enjoy while yet I can
 Thy crowning mercy unto man !

V.

'And yet, I know not what I beg of thee !
 For, O thou Mighty Mother mine,
 How can I fathom or divine
 Or reason out or guess or dream
 Which of thy gifts I ought to deem,
 For mortal man, thy boon supreme ?
 What can so great a bounty be ?
 What hallowed title does it bear ?
 How is it pled for in a prayer ?
 Or how in Saga or by Skald
 Is such a precious treasure called ?
 Can it be syllabled in speech ?
 Or is it spoken not, nor sung,
 But interdicted to the Tongue,

Like that forbidden Holy Name
Which not a Hebrew dared proclaim¹?

VI.

'And is the boon within the reach
Of common mortals, all and each?
Or is it hidden from the view
Of all except a favoured few?
Or is it vaguely veiled in doubt,
That none may wholly find it out?
Or by what token would I know it,
If haply on a bard like me—
Although of low degree,
Yet as a gift of grace
To one of Bragi's race—
O bounteous Earth, thou shouldst bestow it?'

VII.

Now all the while as thus I spake
(With none except myself to hear),
I ran my eyes along the rim
Of Queen Brunhilda's lofty lake²—
Impatient till its crystal dim
Should catch the dawn and glitter clear:
For when the tardy day should break
(That now was near)
I had a task to undertake—
A toil unique,
Which, though it was a sudden whim,
A hasty freak,
Yet bore so big a promise in it,
That I was feverish to begin it.

VIII.

For I had lately much lamented
How idly I had spent my youth—

¹ In ancient Palestine, one of the names of God, though it was known to men, was too holy to be taken upon human lips; but in ancient Norseland, one of the gods—the God supreme above Odin—was too mysterious to have a name at all.

² Princess Brunhilda, or Brynhild, was the mythic maiden whom Sigurd loved, and for whose sake he rode through flaming fire. Despite their troth, the lovers were fated not to wed each other; for by witchcraft—that was powerfully practised upon Sigurd—he was induced to marry Princess Gudrun; while Brynhild was in the same way married to King Gunnar. The subsequent jealousy of Brynhild, who ceased not to love and to desire Sigurd, so overcame her spirit that in her anguish she planned and accomplished Sigurd's death. This tragedy is told in the Elder Edda.

A folly which I so repented
That now (though tardily forsooth)
I said, 'The remnant of my days
Shall all be passed in Wisdom's ways--
If I can find them out,
Whereof I have a doubt;
For they are ways to me unknown,
Untrod before,
And I have read that they are strown
With flint and stone;
And furthermore
They are so narrow and so strait,
That whoso finds them, finds them late,
And whoso treads them, walks alone.'

IX.

Thus for a livelong hour
I in my window-bower
Impatient sat and mulled and mused
Until I found my mind confused:
'For what is Wisdom?' wondered I;
'Is it of Earth or from on High?
Is it for mortals to attain?
Or is their longing for it vain?'

X.

—Whereat my Conscience, with a fierce reply,
Said to me chidingly, 'Thou fool, oh fie!
The world has from of old
By Holy Writ been told
That Wisdom is a thing to be desired
More than the finest gold,—
Yet in thy stolidness, O stupid kern,
It is a thing which thou hast yet to learn!'

XI.

Thus by this self-inflicted fling
(Which pierced me like a hornet's sting)
My goading Monitor within
Convicted me of folly and of misspent years:
As much as if to say,
'Thy youth hath fled away
And left to thee a fool's cap and an ass's ears:
So lest thou also fool away thy prime,
Redeem the time:
Arise and go—
Go high and low—

Go ask the Wise to tell thee what they know;
 And listen well
 To what they tell,
 And all their wisdom heed and weigh,
 Till thou become as wise as they.'

XII.

So, for the profit of my soul
 I planned a scheme
 Which now may seem
 (To sober view) grotesque and droll,
 And yet it was not meant
 As curious sport or cunning jest.
 For though I always, from my birth,
 Had had an overflow of mirth,
 Yet now a cankered sorrow in my breast
 (Not here to be confessed)
 Had put me on a new and sober bent,
 And deeply stirred me with a strange intent,
 Which was, that I might now be clearly shown—
 What in my wayward youth I had not known—
The thing most worthy of a mortal's thought,
 That I might seek it, as a mortal ought.

XIII.

Now this is what I had devised:—
 I was to start at peep of day,
 A Pilgrim on the king's highway,
 Yet so ingeniously disguised
 That I could pass unrecognized;
 Not guessed to be a dalesman of the Ampt¹,
 But deemed a stranger who had thither tramped:
 For I could talk at need
 As Norsker or as Swede,
 Or I could feign
 To be a Dane;
 Moreover, in my cottage attic
 I had for years possessed
 A sacred Alb and Vest,
 Together with an old Dalmatic
 And other toggery brought from Elsinore,
 Such as the Danish Monks once wore—
 All made of Flanders cloth,
 And now bemouthed of many a moth—

¹ Ampt is district or shire.

Save only where, against the breast,
A silken Holy Cross remained
Which not a moth had spoiled,
Nor any mould had soiled,
Nor Time itself had mildewed or had stained :
'As if the emblem of the Holy Cross
Had power to save whatever thereto clings,
Exempting evermore from wreck and loss
Not only souls of men, but souls of things.)

XIV.

So I resolved that I would go arrayed
Not only as a man of humble grade
(For such I was in very deed),
Yet, since I carefully must heed
How not to seem as of the rank
Of mendicant or mountebank,
Or costerman or strolling clown,
Or thimble-rigging cad,
I would *religiously* be clad—
A walking Carmelite¹,
With sandals and an amice-gown
And scapular of white,
And with a wallet, staff and shell :
And thus bedight,
I meant to saunter up and down
Through every neighbouring thorp and town
From cock-crow until curfew-bell,
Accosting like a beggar bold
All whom I met, both young and old,
Both great and small :
Albeit not with hand out-thrust
To beg a pittance or a crust ;
But simply asking to be told,
By one and all,
What worldly honour, gain or prize
Each for himself, with longing eyes,
Was looking up to as the earthly blessing
Most worthy of his winning and possessing.

XV.

The summer day, thought I, is long—
So if I give my feet no rest,
But chase the Sun from East to West,

¹ The Carmelites are among the very few Roman Catholic brotherhoods that flourish among Norwegians ; for Norway is the most Protestant country in the world.

And go where busy mortals throng,—
And if I gather as I go
The thrifty maxims which they know,
I surely shall not fail to find
In all the wit of all mankind—
 In speech or song
 Or homely tale—
Some precious proverb, hint or rune
 That shall avail
To point me to some blessed boon
To which I have as yet been blind ;
Some greater gain, some grander good,
Than I thus far have understood ;
Yet something not too great or grand
For just a carl to understand ;
 No glory too resplendent
 Or rapture too transcendent
For mortals in their mortal state,
Or too preposterously high
For such a worm of Earth as I ;
No heritage too far away,
Or heritable far too late
For common earthly needs like mine ;
No goal celestial or divine ;
 No Glasir Grove
 In which to rove
With Valkyr, Vala, Norn and Van
(Companions hardly fit for Man) ;
No super-earthly Paradise
Of man's invention and device,
Hung high above the noon of day,—
For which the Saints on Earth may pray,
 Yet which, despite their prayers,
 May not at last be theirs ;
 No shining seat afar
 In sun or moon or star
Where possibly the Angels are—
But whether they be there or not
 I lack the grace
 To want their place :
Nor do I pray to share their lot !
I seek instead some boon of bliss
Not in another world, but this !

—There *must* be such a prize, thought I,
And whether it be far or nigh,
I hope to win it By-and-By.

Stave Fourth.

GRASPING AT THE MOON,

OR THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN AMBITION.

AN old-fashioned device known as the 'clog almanac,' or the 'prime-staff,' may still occasionally be seen in practical use in a Scandinavian farmer's house or fisher's cot.

This rustic almanac—which was once common among the peasantry—consists of runic characters, cut with a pocket-knife into a pine board or cedar shingle, for the purpose of showing at a glance the approved dates for planting, for harvesting, for ale-brewing, for swine-killing, for the beginning and end of Yule-tide, and for saints' days and Church festivals.

The 'prime-staff' does not mark all the days of the year—for instead of 365 it gives only fifty-seven; nor are all the markings strictly accurate—for this rude almanac erroneously announces that July 13 is the year's longest day.

Some of the fifty-seven illustrated dates are grotesque; thus November 25 is set down to 'Kate the washer-woman'—this Kate being no less a personage than St. Catharine of Sienna.

The cuckoo's first song of the season is indicated by the figure of a bird, with the date May 1.

St. Birgit's (or Birgitta's) day, October 7, is marked by a sleeping bear;—for the bear on this day is supposed to begin his winter's sleep; a sleep which (according to the 'clog' record) lasts until May 22—though, in point of fact, the bear's hibernation usually ends at a somewhat earlier date.

I.

Forth at the screaming of the Swan
As she awoke and fled her nest,
I, with my ancient relics on
(A stranger to myself thus drest),
On my day's pilgrimage departed
Just as the Sun on *his* had started,
While yet Diana's silver horn
Was regnant both of night and morn.

II.

Already, busy as a hive,
The little Thorp was all alive,
For now came Market-day,
And carts and wains
And wagon-trains
Began by dozens to arrive,
And more were on the way.

III.

Straight to the Market-place I went,
And found a Gypsy-clan,
With all their caravan,
Encamped thus early in their tent:

For as to Egypt's roving brood
 (As everybody knows)
 No coast nor land nor latitude—
 From Gilgit, where the Indus flows
 And Lotos blows,
 To Finmark where the seven-hued night
 Flames with Auroral light,—
 No habitable place
 Upon the whole Earth's face,
 No smallest town in any clime,
 No hamlet on a hill or plain
 Is ever suffered to remain
 Unvisited in summer-time
 By this forever-roaming race,
 Who slily come and slily go,
 And in their wandering to and fro
 Leave many a subtle mark and trace
 Hid like a rune—and unbeknown
 Save to their tribal mates alone—
 To guide aright
 Even at night
 A Gypsy wagon-train :
 And thus, before the break of day,
 In carts bespattered thick with grime,
 The ragged rogues had found their way
 Into the thorp of Nanna's Heim¹.

IV.

Their dingy house of blanket walls
 Stood open wide,
 Lit with a pitchy resin blaze,
 And showing to the public gaze
 A gay inside
 All hung with Roman scarfs and shawls
 Of yellow, red and blue,
 And glittering glass-work, blown in balls,
 (A sort of work the Arabs do)
 And baskets made of willow-reeds,
 Ochred with every hue,

¹ During a ramble along the Loire, in the centre of France, in the autumn of 1891, the author met a great company of Norwegian gypsies, migrating Southward to get rid of their native Northern winter. The spectacle was a picturesque and ragged travesty of the original invasion of France by the Norsemen! The wanderers had a well-thumbed passport, signed by a Norwegian burgomaster. Among six or seven wagon-loads of children—all native Norskers—not one had yellow hair; but all were true to their remote and original type of Egyptian swarthinness.

And ornaments in ormolu,
 And Spanish leathers,
 And peacock's feathers,
And stalks of coriander-seeds,
And strings of peppers dangling down,—
 And here a rag,
 And there a tag,
 And there a velvet gown ;—
For so these beggars came to town.

v.

Their swarthy Queen (into whose cap
I dropped a coin) sat by the road
And held, half-covered by her wrap,
And yet half-naked in her lap,
A babe, who laughed and leapt and crowed,—
Although the bantling all the while,
Despite his wriggle and his smile
(As I discovered by a peep)
Lay sunken in the soundest sleep.

vi.

Then to the mother, as she sat
And suckled her tumultuous brat,
Quoth I, 'Some vision, it is plain,
Is flitting through his baby brain—
Some glowing dream which, I confess,
I would I had the wit to guess,—
For he is mad with happiness.'

vii.

So, stooping low and bending near
I kissed his rose-leaf of a cheek,
And in his sea-shell of an ear
I softly said, 'Bambino dear,
And can a bairn, although so weak,
 Although so small,
Yet jump and jerk, and pull and haul,
As if, despite his pigmy size,
He were a giant in disguise?
Thy hands are of a tender touch,
And yet are desperate in their clutch!
What can so fierce a fight be for?
 What cause enlists
 Thy little fists
In such a furious show of war?
Can it be possible, my pet,
That thou already dost descry

In slumber, and with fancy's eye,
Some glittering prize before thee set,
Which thou who art so young as yet
Dost at thy tender age begin
Thus manfully to try to win ?

VIII.

The Babe, awaking, looked about,
With first a smile and then a pout,
And answered, in a baby's way,
With croon and crow, as if to say,
'Oh yes, the merest midge like me
Can have a purpose, as you see :
Why need I wait till I be grown,
To feel ambition of my own ?
I have a great and glorious aim—
And every baby has the same ;
Our hopes are high, you may be sure,
For we are innocent and pure ;
Our hearts are right ;
And so our weakness is our might :
For what though I be young and wee,
Yet mighty thoughts were born in me—
Thoughts that have ever since my birth
Been more in Heaven than on the Earth :

IX.

'So in my sleep
I often leap
To catch a thing that shines at night—
Up yonder in the blue !
But I have never caught it quite !
The Fairies wash it with their dew,
And so they keep it clean and white :
It is a silver toy—
And looks so spick and span and new,
That always when it comes in view
I jump for joy !
You tell me that I roll and bounce
And flop and flounce,
And in the middle of my nap
Seem leaping off my mother's lap :
This is because the shining thing
Appears so near,
So big and clear,
And all so beautiful and bright
That I am crazy at the sight !

X.

'Just now, although my lids were closed,
I saw it glitter as I dozed:
But always, when I wake, it seems
Not quite so big as in my dreams:
Yet it is silver, as you see,
And beautiful as it can be!
It is the Moon—Oh! what a prize,
If I could pull it from the skies!'

XI.

Then to the tiny tot I said:
'I marvel how thy little head
With huge ambition thus hath planned
To hold a world within thy hand!
Art thou so bold at Life's beginning?
In all thy later years thou never
Wilt plot so daring an endeavour!
Thy baby hopes are wondrous grand—
So grand, I fear, that they are flighty:
For not the Fates themselves, though mighty,
Have power sufficient to fulfil
The monstrous measure of thy will!
Or shall thy feebleness prevail
Where every other force must fail?
If so, be gay
And croon away
And laugh and leap!—

XII.

'For by Saint Birgit and her Bear,
Whilst yet thou art a babe, I swear
Thy slightest whimper,
Thy faintest simper,
Thy dreamy rollicking in sleep,
Thy waking crow, thy ogling stare,
Thy wondrous wise and ancient air,—
All these are powers of thine to coax
And win and wheedle elder folks!
A baby's ways are wondrous winning;
They captivate both friend and stranger.

XIII.

'Indeed there was a Babe that lay
A nightlong on a hutch of hay
And in no cradle but a manger;
And yet before the break of day

Came Wise Men to adore Him,
 Who knelt so low before Him,
 That evermore since then
 Among the sons of men
 A babe, however poor and lowly,
 Is by his birthright high and holy :
 And so art *thou* ;
 But He—thy manger-born compeer,
 The Prince to whom the Angels bow—
 Is Lord alike of sea and land,
 Of earth and sky ;
 While as for thee, thou ragged thing,
 Though thou art something of a king,
 Yet thou art neither earthly grand
 Nor heavenly high :
 And so, Bambino, much I fear
 That yonder haughty Lady Moon
 Is quite too far away to hear
 Thy cunning croon ;
 Or if she heard,
 Upon my word
 I think she is too proud and fine
 To come at such a call as thine !'

XIV.

Thus to this infant at the breast
 I jabbered in a mocking tone,
 As if the child were grown
 And could respond to me with jest for jest.
 But though his mother gave a smirk
 And smiled at all my merry chatter,
 Yet he—as solemn as a Turk—
 Received it as a serious matter ;
 And once agen, with jump and jerk,
 He gave a baby's eager reach,
 And with a quivering of the lip
 He said, if not with speech,
 Yet in a language quite as plain,
 ' You are a full-grown man—but, sir,
 You are not yet too old to err !
 I do not toss my arms in vain !—
 I wriggle and I never stop,
 Because I must be always ready
 To catch the Moon when it shall drop.
 I cannot keep my elbows steady,
 For please to understand
 That I am such a tiny fellow,

And have so wee a hand,
 That things that I would like to snatch
 Are hard to catch :
 The hardest thing to catch, of all,
 Is yonder Silver Ball
 (Which now is Gold, it is so yellow).
 But I must catch it, if I can,
 And I will tell you of my plan :
 Behind the clouds the Moon may hide,
 But out agen it has to glide—
 And oft it has to glide so fast
 That it must slip and fall at last :
 Now hark !
 If it should slip—
 If it should fall—
 It then would drop into my grip !
 And that is why I strive and strain
 With might and main
 To touch it with my finger-tip !
 Oh what a shining mark !
 Now look ! the Moon is coming nigh !—
 And I shall snatch it By-and-By !

Stave Fifth

THE CASTLE IN THE AIR,

OR 'THE THOUGHTS OF YOUTH ARE LONG, LONG
 THOUGHTS.'

ALTHOUGH Odin is the chief of the Norse gods, yet he lacks three attributes of supreme godhead : he is neither omniscient, omnipotent, nor immortal.

Moreover, he even has an ugly physical defect which unfits him to be an agreeable figure in sculpture : he is *one-eyed*.

The legend of his lost eye is this :—

On his first occasion of going to the Well of Wisdom—in order to drink and be wise—Odin was unexpectedly rebuffed by Mimer, the giant who kept the well.

Long in vain the god pleaded to be allowed to drink ; but he was agen refused : yet finally a compact was made between the two disputants, whereby Odin—in consideration of parting with one of his eyes—procured the privilege of dipping his cup into Mimer's well.

Such, and so great, was the price which a god, lacking omniscience, had to pay for acquired wisdom !

Odin's palace of Valhal is on the rugged top of Idavold (or Mount Ida)—just as Jupiter's is on Olympus.

The Norse Jupiter, however, is not Odin, but Thor the Thunderer.

It is Thor who is the real hero of the Norse mythology. He fights the

Frost-giants. He carries for a weapon a hammer called *Miollnir*. He wears for a talisman a girdle called *Megingyarder*. Whenever he flings his hammer, it comes straight back agen to his hand. Whenever he puts on his girdle, his strength is redoubled. He is still (as of old) a favourite personification of the stormy North.

I.

The fierce Norwegian Summer-Sun
 (So bright we call it Odin's Eye—
 And well that Odin has but one,
 For had he two,
 Their double fierceness, I am sure,
 We Norskers never could endure)
 —The Sun, I say, had climbed so high,
 That now from every flower that grew
 He stole the dew;
 But still the birds—with songs galore—
 Were all as boisterous as before,
 For still the day was young and new.

II.

I wandered on,
 Until anon
 By slow descent of crooks and turns
 I traversed—shoulder-high in ferns—
 The Bailiwick
 Of Breidablik¹,
 And wound my way, descending still,
 Until I passed by Thorkel's Mill,
 Where, fearless of its flapping sails,
 A thousand hungry snipe or more²
 Were picking seeds about the door;
 And thither too the shyest quails
 In covies came;
 And even timid ptarmigans grew bold³,
 Whom human kindness rendered tame,
 As if the birds had all been told
 That by the Miller's friendly will
 They there might forage to their fill.

¹ This obscure bailiwick has proudly named itself after the god Balder's principal palace in the sky!

² These are the snipe that say—'chick-a-chick-a chic!'—in unmistakable English words.

³ In Nanna's Heim, the fowl that is known elsewhere as the ptarmigan, is always called the *rype*: in Sweden, the *ripa*: it is the chief game-bird of Scandinavia: and Nature, to give it a chance for its life (for it is hunted by thousands of sportsmen), renders its plumage in autumn as brown as the bracken, and in winter as white as the snow.

III.

The millbrook in its bed of gravel
Made music to me in my travel,
And here and there a frightened trout
Fled from my shadow and leapt out
(But showed to me his flashing fin
A moment only)—and leapt in.

IV.

An Urchin with a book and slate
(Yet not in haste to hie to school)
Stood angling in the Orkla Pool.

V.

Thought I, 'My lad, you will be late!
And what a shame to fool away
The fresh beginning of a day!
For if the precious morn be lost,
It is a blossom nipped with frost;
And never to the bough that bore it
Can even Odin's self restore it.'

VI.

Behind the bracken then I hid
To watch the drone and what he did:
I saw him idly stand and wait,
And whip the water with his bait,
And change the colour of his fly,
Whilst not a trout of all the brook
Came nibbling at his luckless hook.
And well I knew the reason why—
For I, oh lackaday!
Had frightened every fin away.

VII.

So down the angler flung his rod,
And sprawling on the mossy sod
Looked up intently at the sky,
Watching a cloud go sailing by,
That soon appeared to lag and stop
Becalmed on Orkla mountain-top¹.
And there it lay—a stranded barque
That loomed aloft, as when the Ark
Hung high and dry on Ararat.

¹ The hill that overlooks Strelsa Bay.

VIII.

Then from the bracken out I crept,
 And up behind the rogue I stept,
 And said, 'What ho, my bonny boy'
 (As down in front of him I sat),
 'Tell me the secret of thy joy;
 For certes, at a glance I trace
 A look of rapture on thy face.
 What fancy sets thee thus aglow?
 What cheery hope enchants thee so?
 Thou surely hast some wiser wish
 Than just to catch a silly fish;
 So pardon me if I inquire
 What is a boy's supreme desire?—
 Or what is thine?—

IX.

'For I divine
 That with a face so fair and fine,
 And with a spirit so elate,
 Thou art expecting something great!
 A youth like thee,
 With eyes so bright, and thoughts so free,
 Bewrays a lofty pedigree.
 There cannot be in all the Earth
 A nobler birth,
 Or a more royal line,
 O lad, than thine!
 Thou art some goodly mother's son;
 Some honest peasant is thy sire:
 In God's own eye
 Thy rank is high—
 So high that none on Earth is higher.

X.

'But Nature is not Fate,—
 So, though thy gifts be great,
 Yet if thou wouldst pursue
 (As other gifted mortals do)
 Some worldly honour which thou hast in view,
 Thy task will not be easy to be done,
 For all thy honours are as yet unwon.
 Now tell me from thy inmost breast,
 What trophy seems to thee the best?
 What is thy heart most set upon?'

XI.

The stripling, from my trist attire
 (That now was torn
 By many a thorn)
Mistook me for a begging friar—
An object of his merry scorn—
 One of a tribe
 At whom to jibe :
So first he whistled—then he sang—
And then to my astonished ears
He burst into a glib harangue
That showed a wit beyond his years ;
I never heard a tongue more fluent.
Quoth he, 'O Father Capuchin,
I have not sinned a sinner's sin ;
For though I angle as a truant,
 Yet much I doubt
 If catching trout
(Especially when none will bite)
Be wrong in the Almighty's sight !
I never told to mortal yet
The thing whereon my heart is set :
 My secret is my own—
 Mine only—mine alone.
I keep it from the village-rabble,
For if I once in Nanna's Heim
Should make my great discovery known,
Egad, how all the geese would gabble !

XII.

'But I can see no risk or danger
In telling it to you, a stranger ;
So I will reel it off in rhyme,
Which I can spin by foot or yard,—
For every boy is half a bard.
Moreover, though you may not know it,
Youth is the pith of every poet ;
And you yourself, I dare premise,
Would give the wrinkles from your eyes,
And add the tatters from your hood,
To be a poet, if you could !
So listen, Padre, if you will.'

XIII.

Then with a boyish voice, as shrill
As when a widgeon in the spring
 Attempts to sing,

'Sir Priest,' quoth he, 'confession true
 I make to you :
 My heart is set upon a thing
 For ever old, for ever new,
 And never twice the same in hue.
 At daybreak it is orange-bright,
 At noonday it is fleecy white,
 At eventide it is vermillion.—

XIV.

'Thou shalt behold it if thou wilt :
 It is a high and huge pavilion—
 The biggest that was ever built ;
 A house of many a wall and wing,
 And which no Palace of the King
 Of Yan-Teping,
 Nor Mansion of the Hospodar
 Of Kandahar,
 Nor white Pagoda of the Ming,
 Nor gilded Kremlin of the Czar,
 Nor Delhi's pied and mottled Fane,
 Nor tinted Tent of Tamerlane,
 Nor silken Barrack of the Cid
 (That reached the length of near a mile
 And shaded half of Sarak Isle),
 Nor that now-perished Pyramid
 Which once stood midway of the Nile,—
 No, nor the Holy House of Gold
 Built by King Solomon of old,
 Hath ever equalled, I am told !

XV.

'Oh grand were these, but grander yet
 Is yonder porphyry parapet
 Upheld by pillars fairer thrice
 Than any carved by man's device !
 And all the while
 The stately pile,
 From topmost battlement to base,
 Stands not on any ground or place,
 But sinks and lifts,
 And ever shifts !
 For by an architecture strange
 It is remodelled in a trice
 And subject momentarily to change.

XVI.

'This very instant, while I speak,
It moves from yonder mountain-peak;
Look up and see the glorious sight!
Cloud upon cloud! height upon height!
What temple on this earth of ours
Hath such majestic walls and towers?

What human hand
Hath ever planned
A portico so rich and grand,
Or gate of entrance half so fair?
What boldest builder ever known
Could put the pattern into stone?
Its like is built in dreams alone!
It is a Castle-in-the-Air!
And I desire it for my own.'

XVII.

Quoth I, 'O urchin noble-browed,
I will not daunt, I will not dash
A hope so honestly avowed,
And yet so beautifully rash.
The thoughts of Youth should be sublime—
Its aspirations should be proud;
But there are heights too high to climb!
And if thy Castle be a Cloud,
However much thou mayst desire it,

Or dream of trying to acquire it,
It may turn black,
And go to wrack,
And fly asunder,
For Thor may strike it with his thunder!

O big-eyed boy!
Make haste! Employ—
Before the storm—some brawny Nixie,
Or doughty Dwarf, or mighty Pixie,
To bring to thee thy palace on his back!—

XVIII.

'Or wilt thou, for the lack
Of such a useful elf,
Attempt the pretty task thyself?
Hast thou a ladder of ascent
To yonder sky-built battlement?
Or wilt thou on the rolling mist
Walk to those walls of amethyst?

Or canst thou from the lowly ground
Leap thither with a skip and bound?
 The strongest birds, as all the hunters know—
 The mightiest wings that from the forest fly—
 Are ever loth to go
 Where all the upper air is full of frost and snow:
 Even the Lammergeyer¹,
 The very loftiest flyer,
 Mounts not above the middle sky;
 And since thy Castle reaches higher,
 Thou wilt not scale its walls, I think,
 By sprawling on the river's brink.'

XIX.

The lazy lad, who did not cease
 To gaze upon his Tower of Fleece,
 But lay and listened
 Until his eyeballs glistened,
 Filled with all Heaven's effulgence,
 Replied, 'O reverend father Abbot,
 In honour of thy holy habit
 (Somewhat, it seems, the worse for wear),
 I thank thee for thy good advice,
 But have no pence to pay the price
 Of plenary indulgence,
 Or even of a mass or prayer;
 So I must trust to luck instead:
 Which, from the signs that I have read,
 Portends for me a happy fate;
 For my desire shall come to pass
 Whilst I am lounging on the grass.

XX.

'So here I tarry to await
 The opening of my Castle-gate:
 A breath of wind, from near or far,
 Will swing the mighty door ajar.
 The faintest puff
 Will be enough.
 I know not when the breeze will blow,
 Nor whence, nor whither; but I know
 That I shall be a lucky mortal
 When I behold the open portal.'

¹ This is not the Condor, but his kin—the Bearded Vulture.

XXI.

Then to the Boy I said in answer,
 'O young romancer,
 Thy fancy teems
 With empty dreams !
It is the foolish faith of youth
To take these nothings for the truth :
Dost thou in very deed espy
A new Alhambra in the Sky ?
A Valhal like the one of old
That crowned the crest of Idavold ?
Thy Mansion of the Mist, no doubt,
Is very grand, both in and out,
And to its owner may appear
Not only beautiful but near ;
Yet, though I have no measuring-rule,
I fancy that the vestibule
Is forty times too far away
For thee to enter it to-day !'

XXII.

'Why not this very day ?' cried he,
'For you yourself can clearly see,
Just overhead, the tower, the wall,
The dome, the pinnacle, and all !
The vision is so plain in view
That I am sure it must be true !—
And for its confirmation, look !
It is reflected in the brook.
Sir Priest, I cannot be deceived,
For what is seen must be believed !
Good riddance to my slate and book !
 I were a fool
 To think of school !
Why should I have a wish or care
Save for my Castle-in-the-Air ?
O Monk, in spite of all you say,
And even of the Cross you wear,
 I dare declare
That there be Gods more eld than thine,
 And therefore more divine ;
And by the ancient faith, I swear,
That be my Castle far or nigh,
I shall possess it By-and-By !'

Stave Sixth.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE, OR THE ALCHEMIST'S DELUSION.

A 'SKERRY' is a fragment of sea-coast, broken from the mainland, and wholly surrounded by salt water, yet too small to be called an island, and consisting, in many cases, of only a single isolated rock—the haunt of sea-gulls, snipe, and gannet-geese. The skerries are 'a multitude that no man can number.' They are patriotically styled the coastguards or sentinels of Norway. Hakon Skerry was named from Hakon the Great, king of the Norwegians in the ninth century.

The 'Sæhrimner Boar' is the mythical *Sanglier* (or wild hog) whose flesh is roasted for Odin's banquets in Valhal. Odin eats nothing himself—his only diet being wine. But his great company of guests—who consist of the multitude of the souls of slain heroes—are fed at his celestial table on the one substantial article of food which most regaled them on Earth, namely, the meat of the wild boar. According to the Eddas, the wild boar 'Sæhrimner—the ideal game-flesh of the northern woods—is re-killed, re-roasted, and re-eaten every day in Odin's Paradise—and will thus continue to be the prandial luxury of Odin's festal hall until the advent of Ragnárok, or the end of the world.

The original discovery of America by the Norse sea-rover Líf the Viking, in the tenth century, is told in a venerable historic document known as the Saga of 'Eric the Red'; a codex preserved in the University of Upsála in Sweden.

The Norska Fiellen (as their name implies) are the Norwegian mountains.—the backbone of Norway.

I.

The fleeting morning passed, and soon
The shortened shadows brought the noon:
The matins of the birds were over,
But all about me, in the clover,
I heard the hum of honey-bees;
And now, on all the resin-trees,
The strident, sun-adoring crowd
Of shrill cicádas¹ sang aloud;
Whilst far away, like echoing trumpet-calls,
A dozen tumbling waterfalls
Down from the Norska Fiellen roared
And whitened into Flekker Fiord.

II.

I crossed the Ferry
To Hakon Skerry,
And from the sandy bar
I climbed the granite scar

¹ The peasants say that the female cicáda deposits her eggs only in soil that has never been touched by a plough.

Where now the twin lighthouses are,
 Though then no wagon-road, as now,
 Went winding up the mountain's brow.

III.

The place was strange—I knew it not;
 And yet I knew its history;
 The haunt was quite a famous spot
 By reason of a mystery;
 For in that lone, sequestered place,
 (Sole occupant) now dwelt a Finn,—
 A hermit far from kith and kin,
 Self-banished from the human race;
 Not living in a house or cot
 But in a stony grot
 Hewn in the gabbro shelf¹
 By Nature's cunning self;
 A haunt which, as I ventured in,
 Half-blinded, seemed a narrow cave—
 Less like a dwelling than a grave;
 For in its dank, unwholesome air
 The solitary dweller there
 Had grown so hollow-eyed and thin,
 That now at last he looked almost
 A walking skeleton or ghost:
 I never in my life had seen
 A living man so strangely lank,
 So supernaturally lean.

IV.

This hermit, born to noble rank,
 Had quit a vice-imperial court²
 (Or so the gossips made report),
 And to this barren bank—
 This cavern dim and dank—
 Half hidden from the light of day,
 Had come a dozen years before
 (From which they argued he would stay
 A dozen more).

V.

I from my low and humble station
 Looked at this lord with admiration:

¹ This formation of rock consists essentially of diallage and white epidote.

² Called 'vice-imperial' for the reason that Finland is a political annex of Russia.

He was a man whose mind
Was subtile and refined;
And though the garb he wore
Was shaggy like the pelt
Of the Sæhrimner boar,
And bristled like the belt
That girt the great God Thor,
And though his sunken eyes were wild,
Yet noble was his every feature,—
And he was such a kindly creature,
So gracious and so mild,
So very scholarlike and meek,
That I was charmed to hear him speak.

VI.

'Be welcome, weary Sir,' he said,
'And if you hunger, here is bread;
For never shall a beggar say
I turned him from my door away.'

Whereat with quick and hospitable zeal,
And with those lively graces manifold
That marked the manners of a former day
(But which at present are in sad decay
And almost dead),
The noble thane began to spread
A table-mat as for a meal,
And in the centre set a cup of gold.

VII.

Quoth he, 'O Abbot,
You wear a habit
Not often worn among Norwegians—
At least, in these unapal regions:
Now pilgrims of your holy cloth
Live not on faith alone,
But every priest must have his broth,
As every dog his bone:
My larder is not fatly stored,
Yet you are welcome to my board.'

VIII.

'By wide repute, Sir,' answered I,
'Thou art to all the poor well-willed:
But see—my wallet is well-filled;
So I, in turn, now ask of *thee*
To join in a repast with *me*.'

IX.

He shook his head and answered 'Nay!'
And pushed my proffered fruits away:
'Whatever dainties you have brought,'
Quoth he, 'I must partake of nought;
For I to-day
Must calculate a new assay;
So I must think, and think, and think:
Now fasting is the food of thought.'

X.

I weighed his abstinent reply,
And would have put my wallet by,
Save that he led me to a seat
Upon a quern of stone,
And with a pitying tone
That sounded charitably sweet,
He said, 'O famished beggar, eat!
Eat both the portions, thine and mine!
And that you may the better dine
(Although the feast will not be grand)
I offer you, instead of wine,
A bolus of a brand
Not common in the land—
One of the priceless things
Beyond the purse of kings.
For not King Oscar¹, I opine,
Has ever yet been able
To buy it for his table.—

XI.

'I am the host
And should not boast,
And yet no fruitage of the vine
From any vineyard of the Rhine,
No sparkling Muscatel
From sunny Bingenfell,
No beaker which the burghers drain
In Aquitaine,
No cup the chamois-hunters sip
On Tontitip—

¹ This is the present King of Sweden and Norway—a superior man, who in addition to his executive ability, is a scholar of wide learning and of varied literary accomplishments.

Can ever vie in power to cheer
With what is set before you here ;
Which you shall taste before you go.—

XII.

‘But wait awhile—not yet ;
For ere your lips be wet,
I first, O Monk, would have you know
From what this precious drink was made,
And whence it hither was conveyed.
The tale is new
And strange and true :

XIII.

‘Once in a dragon that was tempest-tossed
And nearly lost,
I too, I too,
(Like ocean-loving Liff of yore)
Crossed over to that sunset-shore,
That continent most blest—
Discovered early, rediscovered late—
A land thus doubly the elect of Fate,
The New World of the West.—

XIV.

‘But there, far from its cities and their roar,
I chose to dwell in chilly Labrador,
Where merry Esquimaux
With snow-shoes lightly tread the snow
And chase the mighty Moose whose horny feet
Break through the crust
Until he sinks (as he is sure to do)
Beyond escape if hunters but pursue ;
For fail he must :

XV.

‘And when they bring their panting prey
At last to bay,
He stands deep-buried to his thighs,
Whilst human tears gush from his eyes
And seem, in rolling down,
To be the weeping of a King
At losing of his crown.

XVI.

'Now if before he dies
His tears be caught and treasured up
(In conch-shells which his captors bring),
The liquid is a precious thing—
For, mixed with Bragi-mead and quaffed,
The potion is a magic draught—
A drink for seers.

XVII.

'Here is the brew—here in this golden cup—
A Bragi-cup, mixed with a Moose's tears':
So taste it, pray,
And frankly say
What in your honest heart you *think* of it,
For I am certain that a *drink* of it
Will wash the cobwebs from your brain
And render Nature's mysteries plain.'

XVIII.

So said the Eremite,
And I, lest I should slight
An offer so polite,
Ate both the portions, mine and his,
And also drank both his and mine
(A drink which for its foaming fizz
Was quite divine).

XIX.

I thanked (with more than mere formality)
The Hermit for his hospitality,
And asked myself—as well I might
Concerning such a Troglodyte—
In such a cave, where every cranny
Appeared so spidery and uncanny,
Who could this meagre mortal be?
For certainly—as I could see—
No scion of the Church was he,
With crucifix or rosarie
Or grinning skull or other sign
Of thoughts that ran on things divine:
But from the world he dwelt apart
In practice of a secret art—
A subtile craft of such finesse,
That what it was I could not guess.

¹ A Bragi-cup is a health to Bragi, the god of Poetry: and the addition of the moose's tears—or the wine of the wise—renders the libation a joint homage to Poetry and Wisdom.

XX.

The anvil which he smote
 Gave back a tinkling note,
 Not of a sledge's iron clamour,
 But of a slight and silver hammer;
 The windy bellows of his forge
 Made but a soft and mellow roar;
 And round him in his rocky gorge
 I noticed lumps of smelted ore
 And crucibles and glass retorts,
 And jars and vials of all sorts,
 And books of magic by the score.

XXI.

Quoth I, 'O man of solitude,
 To judge thee by thy musty books,
 And by the lankness of thy looks,
 Thou art a man of learnèd lore—
 A ravening bookworm—lackaday!
 No senex, yet surprising grey—
 Thin as a rail, lean as a lath,—
 Philosopher and philomath!—
 Yet hardly of the sapient brood
 Who sometimes hither stray
 From old Upsála¹ or some other college,
 And yet who seldom make a stay
 Save only for a summer's day.
 I mean no slur by the suggestion—
 (Take no offence, I pray!)—
 But answer me a simple question:
 O lump of learning, say,
 What good to thee is all thy knowledge
 If thus it gnaws thy flesh away?
 Forgive me if I seem too rude,
 But by the Ides and Nones!
 O Master Skull-and-Bones,
 Tell me what cunning work, I prithee,
 Thou now art forging in thy smithy?'

XXII.

The Hermit, balancing awhile
 As if between a frown and smile,
 Stood pensive in his chimney-nook,
 With puzzled look

¹ The University at Upsála, in Sweden, is now nearly five hundred years old.

And arms akimbo, as in doubt
Whether to let his secret out:
 Yet when at last
 His doubt had passed,
His spirit—with a sudden burst
(Like an imprisoned fount set free)—
Poured out its pent-up mystery—
A secret which the lone Adept
Had long within his cavern kept,
 Not only undetected,
 But never once suspected.

XXIII.

Cried he, 'I now no longer will conceal it,
But thou, O reverend Father, art the first
 To whom I venture to reveal it,
 Yet ere I lift the veil
 I ought to say
Why I am moved to trust thee with the tale.
Thou art a stranger in these borders—
A pilgrim passing on thy way;
Besides, thou art in holy orders,
And therefore thou wilt not betray
To vulgar boors who dwell around me
 The lone and weird vocation
 And shady occupation
In midst whereof thou here hast found me.
So use thine eyes—watch and behold;
The thing is better seen than told.'

XXIV.

Whereat I gazed with awe,
And this is what I saw:
At first, as if to calm his thought
(Which my intrusion had distraught),
He stroked the fetlock on his chin
Till he was ready to begin:
He then—to make his cavern dimmer
(Though it was dusky dark before)—
Hung up across his wicket-door
 From side to side
 A walrus-hide,
Thus shutting out some prying rays
That played the trick of peeping in:
Next, in the faint remaining glimmer
He fanned a thin ethereal blaze,

Not hot and red, but cold and green,
 The ghastliest flicker ever seen;
 And finally, and while it flared—
 And while I stared—
 He brewed in an enchanted kettle
 A broth of many a molten metal,
 And skimmed it off at different stages
 As often as he saw it simmer;
 And while he skimmed the broth, he glared
 And gloated with an expectation
 That showed a mad infatuation.

XXV.

I watched him, till at last I knew
 The purpose which he had in view--
 At least, I guessed it;
 And when I boldly told my guess,
 He answered proudly with a Yes,—
 And thus confessed it.

XXVI.

It was the fad of fads indeed;
 For if it only could succeed,
 It was a thing
 That was to bring
 To the inventor an immense renown
 And turn the world (he told me) upside down!

XXVII.

In fact, he hoped (like many a former fool)
 That the Elixir, on its growing cool,
 Would yield at last the calx that silly sages
 Had sought for, down through all the darkest ages
 And which, if found, would be the Stone
 Styled by Philosophers their Own—
 That wondrous uncreated gem
 Unknown to God yet known to them!—
 A talisman to work the cure
 Of all the ills that men endure,
 Transmuting poverty to wealth,
 Restoring the diseased to health,
 And even able (as he said)
 To raise to life agen the dead!

XXVIII.

'So great a prize, thou wilt agree,
 Is worth the striving for!' quoth he.

XXIX.

Then in his weazen face I laughed,
And said, 'O wizard, thou art daft!
The Wise Men of the Earth were seven,
But long ago they went to Heaven;
Art thou the eighth, and wiser far
Than other pedants were, or are?
Thy magic stone, O Alchemist,
Is one that never can exist:
How canst thou hope to find it then?
O most deluded man of men!'

XXX.

Then in rejoinder to my jeer
The Hermit, with a haughty sneer,
And with a lip that proudly curled
Contemptuous of a sceptic world,
Replied, 'O doubter, thrones shall crumble
And sceptres tumble;
But whoso fixes his reliance
On the eternal truths of science
(Whose votary I am, though humble),
May bid, like me, a proud defiance
To all the riff-raff rabble-rout
Who use their little wit in many a fling
At each new thing
Which they know nought about.
Think not, O prelate, that I grope
In all this gloom without a hope,
For Truth is like a glowing spark—
The brightest in the densest dark:

XXXI.

'And though I work
In soot and mirk,
And though the fumes are thick and blinding
And make the secret hard of finding,
Yet what the wise of all the past
Made search for, must be found at last.
They waited long—and *I* as yet
Have not the perfect amulet:

XXXII.

'But day by day, whiter and whiter
Emerge the crystals of the nitre;

And hour by hour, little by little,
 The calx grows harder and more brittle.
 I am in darkness but not blind :
 The seers of old
 Have all foretold
 That when by heat a hundredfold
 The crispy crust
 Is cracked and powdered and calcined,
 And then refined and re-refined,
 Until from every speck of dust
 And every mote and flake of rust
 The fire shall free it,—
 Oh! then the metal in its mould
 Shall change its hue,
 And pass from white to whitish blue,
 From blue to yellowish red,—
 When I will wager thee my head
 That what went in as basest lead
 Comes out as purest gold.'

XXXIII.

'O great philosopher,' quoth I,
 'If so it be, so be it,—
 And may you live to see it!

XXXIV.

'And so I surely shall,' quoth he,
 'For Heaven hath fixed a fast decree
 Whereby no mortal man, not one,
 Shall turn him from his toil, to die,
 Till his predestined task be done.
 I know by many a certain sign
 That I shall live to finish mine.
 The soul in solitary hours
 Is gifted with prophetic powers:
 In this my cell
 I can foretell
 As in a magic glass
 What is to come to pass;
 Truth, being mighty, must prevail;
 Eureka shall be soon my cry;
 Or if indeed not soon, but late,
 I still am master of my fate,
 And I can work, and I can wait:
 My triumph may be far or nigh,
 But I shall win it By-and-By.'

Stave Seventh.

THE HIDDEN TREASURE,

OR THE WALLET OF COIN AT THE FOOT OF THE RAINBOW.

RUNNING through the whole Odinic mythology is a continuous warning to mankind against the corrupting passion which the Latins called *auri sacra fames*—or 'the accursed thirst of gold.'

The original culprits, however, were not the Human Race, but the Gods themselves.

The Norse legend is, that three of the gods (namely, Odin, Hæner, and Loki), during a visit to the Northland, committed an unprovoked outrage on Reidmar, a peasant, by killing his son Otter with a stone.

It is a strange story—for the young man, Otter, at the moment when he was killed, was pretending to be a real otter, into which he had transformed himself by magic:

The gods then agreed to compensate the angry father by paying him, as a 'blood-fine,' any amount of gold which he himself should exact.

He exacted that, in consideration of his son's name, they should pay as much gold as could be stuffed into an otter-skin—full measure—the empty skin to be held up by the head—while the tip of the tail should just touch the ground.

In order to comply with this grotesque demand, the gods invaded the cavern of a black dwarf named Andvari, a gold-maker, and compelled him to surrender to them all his precious metal,—including even the talisman by which he made it—so that he could make no more.

This talisman was a gold-ring called 'Andvarinaut'—which afterward became celebrated in several other myths, especially in the story of Sigurd and Brunhilda.

The enraged dwarf—on seeing all his gold snatched from him—especially his talisman for gold-making—immediately put a curse upon the confiscated gold, and upon the talismanic ring:—a double malediction whereby all future possessors of either the one or the other should inevitably be brought to misfortune and disaster.

The first person to acquire the accursed hoard (including the ring) was the dragon Fafnir—who guarded his ill-gotten wealth in his lair on Gnita Heath—till he was slain by Sigurd the Volsung.

The hoard—in consequence of the dwarf's curse upon it—then became the fruitful occasion of clannish strifes and jealousies, culminating in the famous wars of the Volsungs and the Niflungs.

I.

The afternoon, with dog-day heat,
 Wilted the poppies in the wheat;
 The lilies hung their languid heads;
 The pansies sickened in their beds;
 The very sun-flowers, one by one,
 Were all undone
 By too much sun;
 Even the water-flags that fringed—
 The meadow-brooks were scorched and singed—
 For all the shallow streams
 That caught the fiery beams
 Were shrunken dry, or if they flowed,
 Their channels were not full.

M M

II.

And now the oxen felt their load
 Grown all at once too hard to pull ;
 The sheep lay sweltering in their wool ;
 The rabbit found his coat of fur
 Too heavy, and was loth to stir ;
 The shadow-loving grouse
 Stayed in his shady house ;
 Nor had a partridge on the heather
 The energy of wing to whirr !
 I never knew such blazing weather—
 A fiercer sunshine never glowed !
 I scarce could bear
 The burning glare,
 Yet still I trudged along the road,
 Till in the Stift
 Of Algorift
 I halted where a mower mowed—
 Upon whose blade
 A sunbeam played,
 And from whose brow a sparkling crown
 Of watery diamonds trickled down.

III.

‘What mighty man is this?’ thought I,
 For he appeared
 A Giant of a time gone by—
 A Jotun of the years of yore ;
 Nor had I ever met before
 A swinker of so thick a thigh,
 Or back so brawny,
 Or skin so tawny,
 Or countenance so seamed and seared,
 Or such a stubble of a beard.

IV.

At every stroke,
 His naked arms
 Grew knotted like the gnarly oak :
 At every stride,
 The swath he cut
 Was more than thrice a cubit wide :
 —And as his scythe rushed through the grain,
 The noise was like the swash of rain.

V.

So fierce a labour (I was sure)
 No mortal man could long endure :

But though in such a heat his strength (I thought)
 Would come to nought,
 Yet on and on the reaper wrought;
 Nor did he flag
 Nor droop nor drag,
 But seemed with ever-added ardour
 To work the happier and the harder.

VI.

Quoth I, 'O tireless son of toil,
 Thy zeal is strange;
 Thy meadow is of meagre soil
 And narrow range.
 So, seeing thee in such a stress
 Of soul and sinew, I may guess
 That when thy narrow threshing-floor
 Is piled at last with every sheaf
 Which in so wild a way
 Thou mowest down to-day,
 Thy heart is not to rest content
 With merely what thy scythe hath mown:
 Thy pay, for all thy labour spent,
 Is not to be thy grain alone—
 Thou art for thy reward expecting more:
 Thou hast in mind some intimation
 Of some far nobler compensation.
 Forgive me therefore if I ask
 What grand, what final hope in chief
 Can nerve thee to thy torrid task?
 For much I marvel how, in face
 Of yonder blazing orb of fire,
 Thou toilest at so mad a pace,
 Yet seemest not at all to tire.'

VII.

Then with a burst of laughter, loud and coarse
 (That woke the lazy sheep-dog from his sleep
 And set him barking at the blameless sheep),
 The brawny rustic said, 'O friar,
 I be a pinkel¹ born and bred,
 And you a wearer of the lawn:
 You lack some hardness of bone,
 But have another kind of force,
 For you have brain, instead of brawn;

¹ *Pinkel* and *askefis* are Scandinavian words signifying a dullard or stupid person.

Whilst as for me, a swinish drudge,
 Although the life that I have led
 Has made my frame as hard as stone,
 Yet I am very thick of head
 (An askefis¹, as some have said):
 But now my mind is growing clear,
 As will appear
 From what you hear,
 And you yourself shall be the judge.

VIII.

'But first, O Gown-and-Band,
 As to my patch of land
 And its fertility,
 Or its sterility,
 I answer, Fudge!
 It is to me a thing of nought,
 And does not occupy my thought.
 My meadow, to its utmost marge,
 Is neither very rich nor large;
 But I can boast with all humility
 That now it is about to yield
 What neither any bigger field
 Nor ranker garden ever bore—
 A harvest of a kind unknown
 To any harvester before:

IX.

'But not of grain, oh no, indeed!
 Nor grass nor fruit nor flower nor weed,
 Nor aught that springs from planted seed:
 This harvest has been neither grown
 Nor even sown:
 Nor need I take
 A gleaner's rake
 To gather it upon a cart!
 I laugh, you see!
 There is a cockle in my heart
 That makes my very midriff shake,
 And tickles me with such a thrill
 That I could jump, it seems to me,
 Up to the top of Orkla hill!'

X.

'Thou art a merry carl,' quoth I;
 'So let me ask the reason why.'

¹ See note on preceding page.

XI.

Then, in a stealthy whispered tone,
As if some sly eavesdropping ear
Might chance to overhear
(Although his nearest neighbour was a mile away),
He said, 'O Sir, we are alone—
Now hark to what I say!—
For I am proud that now at last
The day for secrecy is past.
It pleases me right well
To think I now may tell
What I have never told before :

XII.

'I seek a hidden precious prize—
A hoarded, ancient, secret treasure,
A fortune fallen from the skies;
And in this very field it lies;
All I shall ever want, and more!—
And I am now about to find it!
And so my toil is but a pleasure—
Or if a pain, I do not mind it.'

XIII.

Thus answered he,
In words so strange and yet so candid,
That I was filled at once with wonder.
'What *is* this treasure?' I demanded,—
When from a thickening cloud,
Far distant and yet loud,
Outbroke a sudden thud of thunder!—
And with a cry of glee
The reaper shouted 'See!
How fine a rainbow! How it bends!
And how its foot as it descends
Comes just to where my meadow ends!
Mark how the bright and sevenfold band
Leans on the limit of my land !

XIV.

'Now there—just twenty ells beneath the ground—
Is where the secret precious hoard
That I have told thee of is stored—
Concealed for years from human view,
But which I now possess the clue
To lead me to :

A treasure easy to be found,—
For all that I have need to do
Is just to make a spurt, to mow
From here across the field to where
The shining foot of yonder bow
Is standing on the wheat—and lo!

I then and there
(To pay me when my field is mown)
Shall find beneath a gammal stone
A hidden Bag of Money; yea—

Why do you stare?
You have no faith in what I say!
The money—all of it—is gold,
Coined from a fallen star of old!
The tale is true—I know it well:

XV.

'There was a Pleiad, and it fell;
And there were seven in all,
And this, before its fall,
Was brightest of the seven,
And down it dropped from Heaven;
But though it fell so very far,
And struck a mountain and was battered
And bent awry and split and shattered
And buried in the grimy ground,
Yet being such a golden star
It was so bright
That in the night
Some impish Elves (those thievish gnomes
That nightly from their bosky homes
Skip out unseen, to prowling around
And filch whatever may be found)
Espied it and purloined it,
And melted it and coined it,
And put the money in a bag,
And cleft a crevice in a crag
And in the crevice hid the swag.

XVI.

'And oh, the cunning rogues were wise!
It was a bag of otter-skin,
And having stuffed the shekels in,
And having put the precious prize
Beneath the gammal stone,
They left it there alone,

And set no mark upon the spot
To point it out to prying eyes ;
 Yet, to forget it not,
They kept remembrance of the place
As being at the Rainbow's base—
Where still of course the treasure lies ;
For never having been molested,
It must remain where first it rested.—

XVII.

 'It was an otter sleek and fat,
And bigger than a tiger-cat,
Yet ere his skin was with the shekels filled
It needed to be stretched to hold them all:
But since the Elves were more than mortal-skilled
They well knew how, in stretching it and packing it,
To run no risk of spoiling it by cracking it,
 But cunningly to stuff and ram it,
 And press and jam it,
And with uncounted coins to cram it.

It is a pelt that cannot rot—
 A pouch that cannot mould—
And is as full as it can hold :
The money that is in the sack
Will more than fill a pedlar's pack
Or pannier on a camel's back :

 And all this pelf
 Is for myself!—
This is the fee—this is the spoil—
This is the wage of all my toil.'

XVIII.

Thought I, 'The man is surely crazed !
And so, whilst at the Arch he gazed,
I answered with a sorry smile,
 'From here to there is many a mile—
And many a meadow must thou mow
To reach the base of yonder bow.'

 'Not so !' he cried—and swung his hand
Across his meagre patch of land :
 'Do I not know the boundary line
Of this poor narrow farm of mine ?
And since, at farthest, sooth to say,
The Landmark is not far away—
So too the Rainbow must be nigh,
And I shall reach it By-and-By.'

*Stave Eighth.**THE OLD MAN'S DAY-DREAMS,*

OR 'I WAIT UNTIL MY SHIP COMES HOME.'

THE God Odin has two Ravens, one perched on each shoulder, close at each ear. These wise birds are named Munin (or memory and Hugin (or reflection). Odin sends them forth from Heaven every morning to roam all day over the Earth, and to bring him at evening a report of all the secret doings of mankind throughout the world.

'Fafnir' was the dragon who, for a time, possessed the hoard of gold which the dwarf Andvari had cursed, and which now according to certain of the skalds) lies somewhere at the bottom of the Rhine.

'Fimbulwinter' is a predicted winter which is to be of three years' duration, without an intervening summer;—a threefold winter which is to be immediately followed by the final conflagration of the world.

'Grani' was the name of Sigurd's horse—a steed of the Homeric type, of more than animal intelligence; in fact, of half-human feeling: a colossal animal with charmed hoofs, which enabled him to step fearlessly on glowing coals, and to bear his master through flames of fire.

I.

The sinking sun was shining still:
He loitered with a long delay
Behind the back of Orkla hill,
Whose ridgy crest
Across the west
Had caught the arrow of his ray
And slanted it to Strelsa Bay.

II.

I walked through worts and water-weeds
And pimpernels and ferny closes,
And saw the Burning Bush of Moses,
Whose fiery buds were still aflame
Since early June;
I heard the kittywakes¹ all cry in tune
To bid me welcome as I came—
For each announced to me his name;
I passed the orchards where the crossbill breeds
(Who with his scissors clips
The apples for their pips);
I met that rolypoly water-hawk,
The gannet goose, who waxes fat
By feeding on the oily sprat;
But much I missed the ancient mighty auk,

¹ The kittywake is so called from his cry, but he is otherwise known as the tarrock.

Which in my childhood I had known—
 That dodo of the North¹—
 But now (I fear) for ever flown;
 Nor did I trace in all my tramp
 That thievish, terror-spreading scamp,
 The hungry lemming²—for his marching nation
 Was not as yet on its migration,
 But tarrying with the water-vole³
 And hiding like the campanole⁴.

III.

At falling of the evening shades
 I crossed the Dyke of Koboloo⁵,
 Where now the flooding tide ran through,
 And where a gang of Fishermaids
 Had come to set
 Their herring-net;
 For there and then
 In fiord and fen
 The women had to toil like men,
 And livelihoods were hard to get.
 And yet indeed,
 Despite the need
 Of hauling till their fingers bleed,
 These buxom Gammerkins are fair,
 And at their salty toil they sing
 And gaily wear
 Their yellow hair
 Bedecked with half the buds of spring:
 And I am proud indeed to praise
 Such healthy women nowadays;
 And may their herrings bring them gold
 And may their hearts grow never old!

IV.

Around me, from a kelp-clad rock,
 A thousand sea-mews in a flock
 All in a screaming chorus flew;
 While all before me, broad and blue,
 The mighty deep
 Lay fast asleep,
 Save where the breakers round its rim
 Chanted their never-ending hymn.

¹ The great auk's last living haunt was the Orkney Islands, and he now resides only in the British Museum.

² For an account of this brave little animal, see 'Introduction,' page 476.

³ The water-rat.

⁴ The field-mouse.

⁵ A small fishing-station on an arm of Strelsa Bay.

V.

Along the shingle, through the spray,
 I picked my way
 To where, upon a dry-foot ledge
 That overhung the water's edge,
 An aged man (whose head was bare
 And face was scarred with time and care)
 Stood beckoning with a frantic motion
 To something out upon the ocean—
 Although I saw no vessel there.

VI.

On nearer view I grieved to find
 That his regardless eyes were blind :
 I felt a pity—then a pain :
 ‘Ah me!’ thought I,
 ‘His other senses may remain,
 But he has lost the very best—
 The one indeed worth all the rest.’

VII.

I made him an obeisance low
 (A courtesy of poor avail!)
 And said, ‘O honoured head of snow
 (For when a head is hoary
 It is a Crown of Glory),
 Accept the homage that I owe,
 And tell me what I wish to know.
 I see no sail
 For thee to hail—
 Why therefore dost thou beckon so?
 What can thy blank and sightless glance
 Discover in the void expanse?
 Art thou a conjurer, conjuring up
 Some lost transcendent precious thing
 Long cast away,
 And many a fathom sunk and hidden
 In gulf or bay,
 Yet which shall rise to thee when bidden?

VIII.

‘Is it the King of Thulé's Cup?
 Is it the Wizard Merlin's Ring?
 Is it the nine-years' prize which Guinevere
 Flung down in rage into the middle-mere?—
 Or is it Fafnir's gold
 That slipped the holder's hold
 And over which the Rhine-wave rolled?

But be it what it may—
 Yea, though it were Saint Peter's Key
 (Which some are wont to say
 Lies shining at the bottom of the sea)—
 Hast thou come hither with a hope to-day
 That these obedient waves will bring it,
 And at thy waiting feet will fling it?

IX.

'For though, O agèd sire, the sea indeed—
 With all its mighty maw, with all its endless greed,
 With all its vessel-whelming wrack—
 Is never like to have a lack
 Of precious treasures such as these—
 Which it is swift to seize
 And slow to render back;
 Yet, oh, thou dreamer, dost thou dream
 That yon relentless Ocean Stream,
 Yon miserly and gloating Deep—
 With such a wealth to hoard and keep—
 Will listen to thy crazy plea,
 And yield its booty up to *thee*?—

X.

'—Thou frownest, sire!—
 Thou art in ire—
 Thou art offended with me now;
 But tell me, Why dost thou thus knit
 An extra knot into thy brow?
 What Club of Hercules hath hit
 Thine ancient skull
 And knocked away thy native wit
 And left thee dull?
 Forgive me—I am over-bold:
 But thou art venerably old—
 A man so agèd should be wise—
 For with thy threescore years and ten
 Experience ought to make thee sage.
 O time-worn mortal! tell me, then,
 What worldly prize
 Thy stony eyes,
 That stare with such a vacant ken,
 Can look for in a blind old age?'

XI.

Then he (still standing as before,
 Above the rollers and their roar)
 Said with a voice as hoarse as theirs,

XII.

'O stranger, in the happy time
Betwixt my youth and early prime,
Ere yet my later cares
Stole on me unawares,
I launched on yonder mighty main
An Argosy in quest of gain:
There never was a gayer craft,
For she was furnished fore and aft
With silken sails and silver ropes,
And freighted full of golden hopes!—
No Saga ever dared to tell
Of mortal barque or caravel
Or dragon-ship or yarded brig
That ever boasted such a rig
Or ever bore a bill of lading
Of things so fair,
Or of a fairness so unfading!

XIII.

'Indeed my vessel's "manifest"
Was all of articles so rare—
And so unlike what ships are wont to bear—
That (save myself alone)
No mortal could have dreamed or guessed
The curious items which the list, if shown,
Would have surprisingly made known;—
For all I had—all I could call my own—
Was outward bound at sea:
For never had I paused or rested
Till in my ship I had invested
My total stock and store—
All at a risk—without a guarantee—
And when I had embarked the whole,
I wished it had been more!

XIV.

'In sending thus away
All I possessed,
I shipped it, strange to say,
Unpacked in any chest—
Unwrapped in any roll,
Unbattered by a hatch—unstowed
Like any other vessel's load;
Nor did my ship and cargo need
(As other vessels do)
The service of a captain or a crew;
Nor had she any pilot—for she went

Self-guided, self-intelligent:
 I wished my wishes—these were her commands—
 She sailed as she was sent:
 And what she bore was mystic merchandise—
 A sort unseen of human eyes,
 Ungrasped of human hands,
 And therefore which no rude or careless touch
 Could soil or smutch,
 And which no accident could break or bruise
 (Being infrangible
 Because intangible),
 And which no storm could shake
 Nor Ruin overtake,
 Nor even Loss itself could lose!

xv.

‘My vessel’s filmy freight
 Had not a feather’s weight!
 For it consisted all of things of air—
 A load of dreams and expectations!—
 A cargo of imaginations!
 My ship in fact
 Was crammed and packed
 With all my worldly aspirations—
 An invoice far from being small!
 Indeed my hopes were each so great,
 And in their multitude so grand,
 That just to furnish ship-room for them all
 My vessel had to be of huge dimensions.

xvi.

‘She was the largest ever planned,
 A bigger barque
 Than Noah’s Ark!
 And thus was able to contain
 All the pet projects of my brain—
 All my chief hobbies and inventions;
 All my magnificent intentions;
 All my sure prophecies and guesses;
 All my deep secrets known
 Unto myself alone,
 And taken from my heart’s inmost recesses;
 All the sublime anticipations
 Which, though they seemed unfounded,
 I yet had safely grounded
 On never-failing signs aerial—
 (As when the Bird of Calm¹

¹ The halcyon, or kingfisher.

Takes for his nest
A wave at rest,
And utters from the sea
The things that are to be);

All my far-sighted figurations
Drawn from the Human Palm—
(That tell-tale palimpsest);

All my sagacious observations
From things half-mystical and half-material
(Like salt that sparkles sprinkled on the fire,
Or like the throws and counter-throws of dice,
Or omens from the squeaks of mice,
Or lowings of the phantom-ox¹, heard in the byre);

All my new notions, fanciful yet feasible;
All the fond ravings
And feverish cravings,
Which were the fierce delight
Of my soul's appetite,
And fed it to a hunger unappeasable;

All my clear visions manifold
Of every name,
Whether of fame
Or happiness or wealth untold;
Together also with each airy
And beautiful vagary
Of every kind
Known to the mind
In all the triple necromancy
Of mingled Hope and Faith and Fancy.—

XVII.

'All these and more I put on board :
And when my ship, thus stocked and stored,
Seemed shrewdly freighted for a trade
Whereby I thought my fortune would be made,
I sent her forth to seek a mart
Not dotted down on any chart—
A port unnamed, a coast unkennd,
A region hid from mortal view,
And whose discovery would be new ;
A shore beyond the utmost trend
Where sky and ocean meet and blend,

¹ The 'Phantom-Ox' is another form of the fatal spectre of the White Wolf, mentioned on page 495.

And which had loomed upon my sight
In visions of the middle-night!—

XVIII.

'I saw it oft—I saw it well;
Yet where it lay I could not tell;
Nor did I care,—
For whether to the West or to the East,
Or whether to the windward or the lee,
Or otherwhere,
It mattered not to me;
My simple purpose was to send
My vessel to the Earth's far end,—
That mystic place
Where then the World's chief wonders *were*,
And where (unless I greatly err)
They *are*, and evermore will *be*:
And the course thither is by sea
And hard to trace—
A devious way
Which I may say
Full many a ship is like to lose;
Yet mine went forth upon her cruise
Without the faintest fear,
And she has now been gone so many a day,
So many a month, so many a year,
So near a lifetime, if not quite,
That when she started forth from here
Bound to that distant haven,
My hair was of the glossy hue
Of Odin's younger raven!
(You know that Odin's birds are two,
And each as black as Grani's shoe.)

XIX.

'But afterward my head grew grey,
And now (you tell me) it is white—
As white as Fimbulwinter's frost;
And others say to me (with censure)
That I was foolish in my venture,
And that my ship is surely lost:

XX.

'—Which cannot be,
For I will not believe it, No!
And yet it keeps me on the rack:
For why should I have let her go
If she was never to come back?

But I rebuke my tongue for such a strain;
For why should I complain?
The winds at sea are oft ahead
And every ship must beat and tack
And jibe and wear,
And hunt her channel with her lead,
And make her progress like a snail;
But I will swear
That neither winter's gale
Nor summer's hurricane
Can blow my vessel from her track,
Nor long prevent her coming back.'

XXI.

Quoth I, 'Tell me what name, O sire,
So strange an Argosy may bear?'

XXII.

'The name,' said he, 'which first I gave her
Was Fortune's Favour;
But hardly had she sailed
When all my fortunes failed;
And now, since kindly you inquire,
I call her simply Heart's Desire.'

XXIII.

Quoth I, 'Perhaps I do not err,
Old man, in venturing to infer
That thou hast seldom heard from her:
But tell me, good or bad,
What tidings hast thou had?'

XXIV.

'Alas!' cried he,
'Since first my vessel put to sea
I have not heard
A single word;
But hope is hope, although deferred.
Moreover, though the world be wide,
And though the distance be immense
From here to its remotest side,
It now is time my vessel thence
Should bring me back my recompense.'

XXV.

Whereat, although I now had learned
That certainly his brain was turned,

Yet still I tried
To save his pride,
Pretending I was much concerned
In what was likely to befall
An Argosy that held his all;
And so, with an affected zest,
—'What is she laden with?' asked I.

XXVI.

'With jewels!' was his strange reply;
Which seemed a pleasantry—a jest—
Or love-sick fancy of a maiden;
For surely neither in the East nor in the West—
Nor in the Great Mogul's abode,
Nor anywhere on any strand
Or isle or coast where ships may land,
Was ever any vessel laden
With only jewels for her load!

XXVII.

I shrugged my shoulders and demurred:
Said I, 'It is beyond credulity!'

XXVIII. .

Whereat the Greybeard loftily averred
(With Age's proud garrulity)
'I am not making a pretence—
I tell no lie—
I hold a falsehood a disgrace—
It is a thing I spurn;
And so, however blind I be,
I look you squarely in the face
(As if I had the power to see)—
And of my ship I say,
She now is on her homeward way
And crowded full, from stem to stern,
With gems and jewels—these alone:

XXIX.

'And each and every stone
Is of a size unknown
In any travelled land or zone:
Pearls of a whiter sheen
Than those of Egypt's Queen¹;
Rubies of richer red
Than those for which the dove hath bled²;

¹ Cleopatra.² Pigeon-blooded.

Sapphires of brighter blue
 Than woman's eye
 (As I remember it in days gone by);
 And diamonds too,
 Like drops of water in the light
 (For I have not forgot the sight);
 And countless gems of every hue—
 A shipload!—and the ship is due!

XXX.

'I care not therefore that my head is hoar,
 For I am glad that I am young no more.
 A man is but a fool, forsooth,
 To whine at waning of his youth :
 Youth has been oversung.
 What did my boasted youth for *me*?
 What but to push me into plans
 That were as grand as any man's,
 Yet always failed and kept me poor!
 I was no idler in my early days
 (As most of all our youngers be);
 I sought my fortune in a hundred ways;
 But though I wrought
 With care and thought,
 Yet my reward was nought—or less than nought:

XXXI.

'I burned the midnight oil,
 Yet all my toil and moil
 In making plans and schemes and wonderful devices
 Was but a hatching of the eggs of cockatrices—
 Till I was bit and stung
 For simply being young!
 Beware thy youth—it is a lure!
 It is a harbinger of vain regrets,
 For it will bring thee losses to endure—
 And worse than losses—debts—
 Which by their manifold increase
 Will wear thee out and rob thee of thy peace!—

XXXII.

'I better love my white and wintry age,
 When now my work is sure to have its wage,
 For I am shortly to receive
 (Perhaps upon this very day)
 My long-deferred and honest pay!

Of course you cannot quite believe,
Or even understand,
A boast that seems so grand:

Besides, permit me, sir, to say,
Your voice is yet no scrannel-pipe;
You still are young—jeune, not ripe,
Perhaps not even grey;
What number you yet of life, who are not old?

The heart of youth is bold;
But though you feel it beat and pant
In search of gold,
Yet how can any Stripling hope to win
Those precious treasures hid beyond the main,
Which Far and Orient Climes are richest in?—
Climes further East than the Levant,
And quite beyond the reach
Of mortal ships or human speech;
Lands far away—requiring years
Of toil and tears
Ere any certain knowledge can be gained
Of how their treasures are to be obtained?
Hope is not hope till patience tests it long;
Faith is not faith till trial makes it strong!—

XXXIII.

'There comes at last a moment in our lives
Worth all the weary years that went before—
It is the moment when our ship arrives
That brings our long-expected wealth ashore.
So here beside the ocean's foam
I wait until my Ship comes Home!'

XXXIV.

Quoth I, 'Thy waiting may be long!—
The sea hath sirens, and their song
May lure a venturous craft like thine
And whelm her in the boiling brine;
Or she may burst her silken sails
And scud in rags before the gales;
Or prove (like many a hope, alas!)
To be a brittle ship of glass,
Which suddenly the slightest shock
May shiver on some hidden rock.

The heavens are often unrelenting,
And lend themselves to the preventing
Of man's desire :
A thousand keels, O wrinkled sire,
Shall come from Tarshish and from Tyre,
From Cancer and from Capricorn,
Ere thine shall bring thee Plenty's Horn !

Remember how the thick-ribbed Argo,
Though built of oak and fifty-oared,
And with the Golden Fleece¹ on board,
Was smitten of the tempest's ire :
So tremble for thy ship and cargo !
Thou hast a vain possession,
For by thine own confession
This Argosy of thine is far more frail
Than any other craft that ever spread a sail ;
The very least disaster
Must cripple and dismast her.
Indeed I more than half suspect
That either she has long been wrecked
Or else that (bound, as thou dost boast,
To an enchanted sea and coast)
A cruise like hers, so far away,
Will last for ever and a day !
O blind old man, thy hopes are great ;
But is it wise for thee to wait
For such a ship and such a freight ?'

xxxv.

Then with some childish, happy tears
(Such as the old are proud to shed
At hearing mention of their years),
He stiffly raised his haughty head,
And speaking arrogantly, said,
'O stranger, I am not cajoled !
One grows the wiser, being old ;
One sees the further, being blind :
There is a forecast in one's mind
Whereby one's fortune is foretold.
I have for many a year foreknown
What wealth would one day by my own ;
And now the hour has come to which
I long have looked to make me rich.

¹ The Golden Fleece was found hanging on an oak-tree in a grove near Colchis ; and Jason snatched the prize and carried it off in the Argo.

Oh how the world will envy me!—
 I shall be rich as rich can be!—
 Richer than any prince has been—
 For now my ship is coming in!’

XXXVI.

‘O visionary man,’ I cried,
 ‘And will this present wind and tide
 Bring to an anchor—in this road—
 This vessel, with this wondrous load?’

XXXVII.

Whereat the tottering patriarch
 (Still making signals to the main,
 Although it bore in sight no barque)
 Replied, ‘O Sir, the case is plain:
 A ship that sails the world around
 Must soon or late be homeward bound;
 And so must mine;
 And as I reckon,
 She now perhaps is near at hand,
 And waiting to receive from me some sign,
 Some signal, some command
 To warrant her to anchor and to land,—
 And that is why I stand and beckon.
 Or if she be not here as yet
 (For tidings, Sir, are hard to get),
 Yet this I know,
 That breezes blow
 And waters flow,
 And whether she be far or nigh,
 My ship is coming By-and-By.’

Stave Ninth.

A PARTY OF PILGRIMS,

OR A PICNIC AMONG THE STRELSA PINES.

THE Skaggerack—the strait or sound between Norway and Denmark—became the headquarters of the Norse sea-rovers in the Viking times; and on its northern (or Norwegian) shore, to this day, dwell not a few direct descendants of those ancient adventurers. These modern scions of the old stock are hardy fishermen; and the boats which they now use do not greatly differ from the ancient ‘sea-dragons’—except in the absence of warlike accoutrements. The stony remains of forts, watch-towers, tombs, and treasure-caves—dating from the ninth and tenth centuries—show that the Skaggerack afforded the chief and favourite harbourage of the original Vikings.

I.

The Sun, reversing now his beam,
Shot up a final fiery gleam
From where he just had fallen down
Into the depths of Strelsa Bay ;
And I beheld him sink and drown.

His dying glory was supreme.
I love the death of such a day,
That dies, yet all the while is bright,
And seems (like Holy Writ) to say
'At evening time there shall be light.'

II.

I gazed, and to my dazzled sight
The half of Heaven took fire and burned ;
The crystal Skaggerack
Flashed the refulgence back,
And all the Naze
Was in a blaze.

III.

The tinkling cattle homeward turned ;
The weary sea-mew sought her nest ;
I too was tired,
And half desired
To make a finish of my quest.
And yet how little I had learned !—
Just what I knew before !
Not an iota more !
In every thorp and ampt and region
Which I had travelled through,
The fools that I had met were legion,
The wise were none, or few :
And I discovered, strange to say,
That, sage or simple, young or old,
They each had innocently told
(And all their several tales agreed)
What ninnies they had been indeed !—
Beguiled and duped and led astray,
Not once nor twice,
Not twice nor thrice,
Not for a day, nor now and then—
But all the race of mortal men
Without exception, as I found,
Were April-fooled the whole year round !

IV.

So while the glow was in the West
(And made the eve a softer noon)
 I further wandered,
 And mused and pondered,
And sighed, and said, 'I marvel much
That every mortal's dearest boon
(Or what appears to him as such)
Should prove as false as it is fair,
And always at his grasp or touch
Should melt away and not be there !

V.

'The Babe shall see (and oh how soon !)
How hard it is to catch the Moon ;
The Youth shall marvel when and where
His Castle vanished in the air ;
The Sage shall waste his flesh and bone,
Yet miss at last the Magic Stone ;
The Reaper shall repent his whim
Of mowing to the Rainbow's rim ;
The Greybeard shall not be alive
To see his Treasure-Ship arrive.'

VI.

Thus viewing life through all its range
Of mortal years, I said, 'How strange
That Infancy and Youth and Prime
And Hoary Age, each in its time,
Each in its turn, with eyes uplift
And hands outreached as for a gift,
All seem to struggle, strive, and strain
For just a phantom of the brain—
A mere vagáry of the mind—
A thing to seek but not to find !
The more they follow it, the more
The fleeting image flits before !

VII.

'So every man, a giddy lout,
Goes ever gadding roundabout,
 Chasing with vain persistence
 Some gilded butterfly,
That seems at no great distance,
Yet which has no existence
 Save in the gazer's eye.'

VIII.

Back through my Native Vale profound,
 While evening shadowed it around,
 And while I listened to the sound
 Of twenty waterfalls
 That sprang, white-footed, with a bound
 Over their jagged walls,
 And foamed into the fiord at Skong,
 I homeward trudged along
 (Returning by the Orkla Weir).

IX.

'What though,' thought I,
 'A man must die,
 Yet is it therefore clear
 That Life is but a thing of nought?—
 A vanity and nothing more,
 As Solomon proclaimed?
 And was his wisdom, then, so great?
 Oh cruel irony of fate!
 A King so wived and concubined
 Could not have known a quiet mind!
 His heart was always sore!
 He had his Vanities indeed!—
 Whereat he eloquently vented
 A spirit vexed and discontented!
 A note so cynic I despise:
 King Solomon was far from wise:
 For I maintain
 That in the main
 This Life and World are not in vain.

X.

'And yet—and yet,
 The World seems empty, after all!
 It has a lack
 Of something gone that never will come back!
 The very sunshine lies upon it as a pall¹!—
 As if the Sin of Man had cast a shade
 On every goodly thing that God hath made!

XI.

'Deep down within my bosom's core
 I feel the pang of a regret
 That now the Gift of Insight, which of yore
 The Prophets had, exists on earth no more.

¹ Wordsworth.

Things outward we are quick to see,
 But to things inward we are blind :
 Our spirit, for its sight,
 Hath need of heavenly light ;
 Our spirit's eyes are bandaged and through life we go
 According as we grope and guess, not as we see and know.

XII.

' Why should such ignorance be ?
 Is it that Eden's Tree
 Has come to fruitage for a second time,
 And bears agen on Earth a fruit forbidden ?
 Is every kind of knowledge to be known
 Except the noblest and the best alone ?
 Must all the highest mysteries still be hidden ?
 Is man's desire for truth once more a sin and crime ? '

XIII.

Thus, in a humour for complaining,
 And with a heart unhumbled,
 I railed and scoffed and grumbled,
 And (what was worse)
 I fancied with a proud disdain
 That God—the King of Kings—whose reign
 Extended once through the domain
 Of all his Universe—
 Was now unheeded and unknown,
 And ceased to occupy His Throne.

XIV.

And now I gnawed my nether lip, and said,
 'I cannot scorn
 The humbly born
 Lest I should scorn myself—yet I admit
 That through the whole of Nanna's glen,
 From Lister Ridge ¹
 To Mandal Bridge ²,

¹ The village of Lister gives its name to a wide maritime district called Listerland.

² Mandal is the southernmost town of Norway—as Hammerfest is the northernmost.

And if the reader has a taste for minute topography, he may now—once for all—be appropriately referred to the Ordnance map : or if he would prefer an easier reference to Baedeker, here it is :

Speaking of Carl Olaf's country, Carl Baedeker says—'The Mandal river, which falls into the fiord at Mandal, descends through a valley . . . the *upper* part of which is inhabited by a *very primitive and pastoral people*. In summer

From Hyndla to the Water-Shed,
 Thence westward to the Water-Spout,
 And on from Klapperpad to Klaybers,
 My rude and rustic mountain-mates—
 My hunting, fishing, farming neighbours—
 Are folk not favoured of the fates :

Their mother-wit—

Their native sense—may not be small,

But, one and all,

These honest carls are poorly taught—

So ignorant indeed

That they can hardly read ;

Their lot is low ;

They are but dalesmen of the Ampt,

Who never pass their mountain-wall,

And never see the World at all,

From which they dwell aloof ;

What can they know ?

Their minds are cramped ;

Their evidence must go for nought ;

I must have ampler proof,

I must make wider search.'

xv.

Then from a lofty perch
 Upon a thousand-year-old oak
 A Raven hailed me with a croak.

This bird is wise (the Sagas say),
 And being cousin to the Pie,
 Has foresight and can prophesy,
 And often bids a traveller halt
 To set him right if he be wrong,
 Or else to give him good advice
 When he most imminently needs it ;
 And if the hearer seldom heeds it,
 The babbling bird is not at fault ;
 The fault is his whose churlish mind
 Rejects a service meant as kind.

they migrate to the neighbouring mountain-pastures . . . where they are not unfrequently attacked by bears.'

Nanna's Heim is about half a degree to the north of Mandal—and is the favourite latitude of holly, hazel nuts, wild strawberries, and the campanula flower. The streams are mostly of fresh water leaping down from the hills, though others are estuaries that reach far inland from the sea, and make salt meadows for the cattle and goats.

XVI.

My Raven did not chatter vainly;
 I understood his lingo plainly.
 'Sir Pelerine,
 Or Peregrine,
 Or whatsoever name,' quoth he,
 'Your travelling cognomen may be,
 The reason why
 I hither hie
 From kingdoms of the East and South
 (Where I have visited the Cham),
 Is just to bring thee, in my mouth,
 A word of magic—which is Fram¹!

XVII.

'I brought it to thee years ago
 When thou wert lazy, dull, and slow;
 For thou wert then
 The idlest of all idle men,
 And all thy days were spent in pastime;
 But though I come to thee agen,
 Yet *this* time is the *last* time;
 And now I say,
 Keep on your way—
 You cannot be benighted;
 You will not need to grope or halt;
 The little lamps of Odin's vault
 Will one by one be lighted.

XVIII.

'Go on, for after all your pains
 I know that all your gathered gains,
 Through all this livelong day,
 Have been but *Nil*:
 You have not found the pearl of price—
 Go seek it still!
 For you shall find it if you will!
 —My manners are not over-nice,
 Yet I who warn you so
 Am not a common crow:
 My name—as probably you know—
 Is Munin², and I live on high:
 My brother Hugin³—he and I—

¹ *Fram* (in the Norsk) means 'forward.' And hence the Arctic explorer, Captain Nansen, with great felicity, named his adventurous vessel the 'Fram.'

²⁻³ Of Odin's two ravens, Munin is memory; Hugin, reflection.

For ever come, for ever go
 On Odin's errands through the sky;
 And every word I say is true:
 So Fram! Go forward! And good-bye!
 —Whereat he flapped his wings and flew
 Straight up into the blue.

XIX.

The Raven's speech
 Was such a screech,
 That after he had stopped his croak
 I still imagined I could hear him;
 And though I had no cause to fear him,
 I felt so creepy and affrighted
 That I had knockings of the knees;
 Until, to my relief, I sighted
 Not far away a whiff of smoke
 That curled above a clump of trees—
 A sign to which I onward pressed,
 For what it signified I guessed:
 —And oh that I could now infuse
 Into my lagging, flagging Lay,
 By help of some superior muse
 Like high Urania (last and most divine
 Of the Parnassian Nine),
 Some of that happy thrill
 (Which I remember still)
 That came to me to cheer my heavy breast,
 Just at the ending of that dusty day.

XX.

Up from the bank of Orkla Brook,
 And at the very bend and nook
 Which in the morning I had passed
 And now had reached agen at last,
 Arose a clang of noises made
 By cudgelled asses braying
 And fretted horses neighing
 And fly-stung oxen stamping;
 For there, amid a mirkwood shade,
 Some Tourists, after a day's tramping,
 Had halted for their nightly rest,
 And had commenced encamping.

XXI.

It was a motley cavalcade,
 Made up from many a different land,

Especially from South and West :
The troop had formed at Christiansand¹,
And thence, with cream-white ponies and a guide,
Had started for a fortnight's sylvan ride
Up through the narrow North to Hammerfest—
That Arctic town
Of high renown—
A meagre thorp more celebrated
Than many a city walled and gated :
For of all villages, however small,
That dot the cincture of this earthly ball,
This tiny one—
Almost the tiniest one of all
(Yet strong enough to smell for leagues away
Of rancid fish-oil on a summer's day)—
Sits on its crag,
And for a brag
Puts forth the mighty boast
That it is Northernmost !
And once a year its promontory
Borrows a transient gleam of glory
From the uncertain Midnight Sun !

xxii.

So ships from everywhere
Go creeping to the misty little port
To anchor off the feeble little fort
And tarry for a week or fortnight there,
With patient passengers, who learn to wait,
However long, however late,
To see—or try to see—that baffling sight,
The orb of day shining at dead of night !—
A glorious miracle !—yet seldom done !

xxiii.

The Midnight Sun,
I fancy, would be fine
If only it would condescend to shine :
But every ship that goes there (see her log)
Always reports a never-failing fog !
—Yet where, oh tell me, tell me where,
In any region of this Earth below,
Is there a Human Hope, if bright and fair,
That does not disappoint exactly so ?
—Fulfilment never hurries nigh,
But always waits till By-and-By.

¹ This thrifty city, which was lately devastated by a conflagration, is already briskly recovering, and will soon look all the brighter for the fire.

Stave Tenth.

MANY MEN, MANY MINDS,

OR THE DIVERSITY OF HUMAN ASPIRATIONS.

GINUNGA-GAP (or 'the yawning chasm') is the uncouth name by which the Eddaic bards designated the original Chaos.

It was from this void—reaching from North to South, or from cold to heat—that the earth was created.

But the earth, according to the Norse myths, was not created as a globe or sphere. Its rotundity was not suspected. The abode of man was simply a terrestrial plain—ridged by the mountains, and girded by the sea.

Accordingly, the Norse country with its remarkable cliffs, fiords, and cascades—and with its Aurora Borealis, and its Midnight Sun—is supposed to occupy the exact centre of the original Chaos or Ginunga-Gap.

Quite another thing is Ragnárok—which is not an Alpha, but an Omega—not a beginning, but an end.

This strange word Ragnárok—(literally 'the twilight of the gods,' or the dimming and darkening of their glory)—means Doomsday.

On this, the world's last day, Heimdal (like Gabriel) is to blow a 'last trump.'

Gabriel's trumpet is without a name, but Heimdal's is called the Giallerhorn.

Heimdal ('Heaven's guardian') keeps this mystic horn hidden within the foliage of the tree Ygdrasil.

On the morning of Ragnárck, the rainbow god Heimdal—with a blast on this long-hidden horn—will summon forth the whole army of heroes in Valhal to fight against the Fire-giants.

But the Giallerhorn which Heimdal is to blow will be blown in vain; for Odin and his heroes—though they will respond gallantly to its summons—are nevertheless foredoomed to lose the battle; the Fire-fiends are to triumph; their torches are to set the world on fire; Heimdal's bridge or the rainbow is to be melted away; the mundane and typical tree Ygdrasil is to be consumed—till, limb by limb, it shall drop into the sea; and thus the present imperfect universe is to be dissolved, giving place to 'a new Heaven and a new Earth.'

Meanwhile—and until the coming of 'the last great day'—the twelve great Gods of Asgard will continue to hold their daily council at the brink of the Urdar fount, under the oft-sprinkled branches of Ygdrasil, and always in reverent subjection to the Norns.

In going to this daily council, all the gods (except one) are allowed to gallop over Heimdal's bridge, that is, over the rainbow.

The one exception is Thor the Thunderer—whose rattling chariot, if he were allowed to drive it along the *arc-en-ciel*, would endanger that delicate piece of architecture.

Thor, therefore, in going to the council of the gods, cannot go on horseback, but must walk.

It is Thor's daily journey from the earth to the heavens that compels him—in order to get to the council at the Urdar fount—to wade across several swollen rivers—especially the Ormt, the Kormt, and the two Kerlaugs.

The other fount,—Mimir's well,—is terrestrial.

It is the well of worldly wisdom.

It is also symbolic of the North Sea or the German Ocean—into which Odin's one remaining eye (or the sun) sinks at the close of every day.

I.

The Tourists to whose camp I came
Had set their kettle-fires aflame,
And being hungrier than a troop of bears,
Their supper now was their supreme of cares!
I joined their bivouac for a bite,
For I too had an appetite!

II.

I sat with the carousing band
And asked of each and every one,
According to his mood,
What aim he had pursued?—
What fancy had allured him most?
What greed had led him on from coast to coast?
And how his travels, far and wide,
Had satisfied,
In whole or part,
The hungry hankerings of his heart?

III.

The answers I received
Were hard to be believed;
They staggered me and struck me dumb!
For each narrator but repeated
Whence he had come,
And how, while on his way,
He had in open day
Been most egregiously beguiled and cheated
And lured astray!
So each, at what he sheepishly confessed,
Became the boisterous butt of all the rest.

IV.

One, with a smile-bepuckered mouth
(A Swabian from the silly South)¹,
Said, with a self-convicting candour,
'I sallied forth with a desire
To catch a living salamander²;
But to my rue,
All I could do
Was just to burn my fingers in the fire!'

¹ Swabia is the butt of jests on account of a supposed thickheadedness inherent in the typical Schwab—who is likened to the dull Boeotian of the ancient Greeks.

² Like the chameleon, the salamander is a small lizard that has given rise to a strange fable—being long supposed to live unharmed in a flaming fire—even in a sevenfold furnace-heat.

This speech was odd, and made a hit,
And seemed to be a stroke of wit:
For speeches often pass for good
Through lack of being understood.

v.

The next recital was more grand,
And harder still to understand.

A Magyar, with an owlsh face,
Had been to what was ancient Thrace :
'I crossed the Caucasus,' said he,
'On purpose just to hear and see
The Singing Tree¹,
Yet never found it,—
And so it never sang for *me*;
Or if it did,
The hum of all the world around it
Completely drowned it.'

vi.

We gave our Magyar² a guffaw,
Which changed into a loud hurrah :

For now a keg came rolling in ;
Inspired by which, amid the din
Of many a jingling dekkel-lid,
That oped and shut and banged and snapped
Against the beer-mug which it capped,
A Spanish student from Madrid
Said gravely, with a mock salaam
(Doffing his scarlet fez
Which he had bought at Suez),
'I made on foot a whole year's tramp
Through all the realm of the Nizaam
To Bilso, for Aladdin's Lamp,—
Yet never could I find a trace
Of such a lamp or such a place.'

Whereat, to chaff the speaker, we derided him,
And said it must have been a fool who guided him.

vii.

And now the ale, with flaky foam,
Made every stranger feel at home ;

¹ The Singing Tree is in the Arabian Nights.

² There is a tradition in Hungary that the Magyar tongue was the original language of the world—spoken by Adam and Eve in Eden.

And ever as the jug was passed
 Each tongue grew louder than the last.
 Amid the noise, a Muscovite,
 Of dwarfish height
 (In fact the man was but a mite),
 Said, with a self-important air,
 'I left Yrkoutz,
 And went to Cairo, to a fair,
 To try to buy myself a pair
 Of Seven-Leagued Boots:
 But shut was cobbler Hassan's shop,
 And all his trade was at a stop—
 A trade whereby, although a master,
 He earned no longer a piastre;
 For as the times now go,
 Such travel is too slow—
 There being in its stead, you know,
 The newer notion,
 That locomotion
 Should be like lightning, or a little faster.'

VIII.

Outburst a squall of Ahs and Ohs
 From all the board, and then uprose
 A pious Croat
 (A priest of note,
 And who at Agram in the Church
 Had been a Padre to the poor'.
 'I undertook,' quoth he, 'a search
 Through all the ancient shrines at Tours¹,
 In hope to find within the town
 (Or in the caverned rocks outside)
 Some remnant which those caverns hide
 Of old Saint Martin's gown²—
 That garb of eider-down,
 Which once the Saint, upon a winter's day,
 Cut with his sword in twain,
 And to a naked Beggar (so they say)
 Gave half the robe away:
 Yet,' quoth the Croat, 'through all Touraine
 I sought in vain
 To find the half that must remain.'

¹ 'Tours' is pronounced without sounding the *s*, and rhymes with *sure* and *poor*.

² A sumptuous and costly tomb has just been built for St. Martin in a new church at Tours.

IX.

After some mock applause
 A Runen Magistrate,
 Grim-visaged and sedate,
 Full of judicial saws,
 And ripe in all the lore of all the laws,
 Gave to the table such a knock
 That all the tankards felt the shock
 And thus he spake: 'You all will laugh—
 You all will jibe and jeer and chaff—
 For once, in dread of Ragnârok
 I swam the Ormt,
 I leapt the Kormt,
 I plunged into Ginunga-gap;
 I risked all hazard and mishap,
 To reach the brink of Mimir's Well;
 But when I stooped to dip my shell
 And drink my draught, and so be wise,—
 The fount dried up before my eyes!'

Whereat we shouted, 'Whew!
 What tale is ever true?'

X.

Then came a Swomian¹ discourse
 By one who hailed from Helsingfors
 (Whose mellow native tongue
 Is called the sweetest ever spoke or sung².
 He was a scholar bred,
 And he had many a ballad in his head,
 All borrowed from the Kalevâla Lay³,
 And which in cunning style
 He on his kantali could play³,
 Bringing a tear and then a smile.
 And this is what he strangely said:
 'I tried,' quoth he, 'to solve the riddle
 Of Bragi's spirit-haunted fiddle,
 That played itself without a bow,
 Or touch of hand,
 Till folk who chanced to hear it played
 Said that the music which it made
 Dropped down from Odin's Upper-land,
 And that the instrument had wings,

¹ Swomian is another name for Finnish. *Suomi* means a marshy country—a fen land. Hence, Finland.

² The Kalevâla Lay includes the greater portion of the folk-lore of Finland; and it furnished to Longfellow the metre of *Hiawatha*.

³ A harp of five strings—the national instrument of Finland.

And came and went
 Divinely sent
 Alike to palaces of kings
 And huts of shepherds on the moor;
 But I am sure
 That some unlucky, sad mishap
 Has finally occurred to snap
 Those now for-ever-silent strings.'

XI.

This rhapsody fell flat and dead;
 And then a Munich pedant—pale
 Through much addiction to a pipe,
 And to an orgie called a Kneip—
 Arose and said:
 'I chanced to read a crazy tale,
 How that the wand of Prospero¹—
 Which (as they say)
 He threw away—
 Still lay in the Trinacrian Sea—
 As if it waited there for *me*!
 In a felucca off I flew
 To where the water was a sapphire blue,
 And there I shortened sail
 To slacken speed,
 And dragged most cautiously and slow
 A hair-knit, triple-knotted net,
 With double dredges interset;
 Nor zeal nor labour did I spare,
 But swept the sea-floor everywhere,
 As when a hussy plies her broom
 In every corner of a room.
 —And yet, from all my care
 What profit did I reap?
 I brought up nothing from the deep,
 Save only here and there
 A snapping crab, or wriggling worm, or slimy weed!
 So fiddle-faddle! is my cry—
 The thing called Human Hope, say I,
 Is what no Human Soul should heed!
 I lost my net, for it was torn to bits,—
 And folk there be who dare declare
 I also lost my wits.'

¹ If Prospero carried out his intention, he buried his staff in the earth and drowned his book of magic in the sea.—*Tempest*, Act v. Sc. 1.

XII.

A young Roumelian, who was lame
 (Which mortified
 His manly pride
 And grieved his spirit overmuch),
 Said softly (in a tone to touch
 The sympathy of all the table):
 'I had in life a single aim,
 Which was, to rid me of my crutch:
 I grew to hate it—scorn it—scout it!—
 So I resolved to do without it.
 And this is how I set about it.
 I could not walk, and so must ride;
 And hence, of course,
 I first must learn to mount a horse.
 And learn I did,—till I was able
 To mount at need
 The wildest steed,
 And spur him to his highest speed.
 "Aha!" quoth I,
 "My crutch, good-bye!
 I will go gallop to the sky!"

XIII.

'Whereat I climbed upon the back
 Of Al Borák—
 Mahomet's horse¹—
 A roan with wings, a hippogriff,
 Whose hoofs had such a facile force,
 That he could bound from cliff to cliff,
 Touching the rock
 Without a shock,
 And who, at every leap he took,
 Sprang farther than a man could look!

XIV.

'At first, low down along the shingly shore,
 With pinions strong,
 My shivering soul full tenderly he bore,
 Skimming along
 Where I might view my Native Vale once more:
 Then up he sped—
 High overhead—
 Passing the moons till he had passed eleven:

¹ The Korán makes Mahomet ride a mare, but the Northern imagination assigns him a stallion.

And then, when all these sacred orbs were passed,
 Except the twelfth and last,
 I came so near to God's abode,
 That, at the rate at which I rode
 (Oh, it was breathless fast!)
 I would in just a moment more
 Have galloped straightway into Heaven!
 But suddenly there came a flash
 And then a crash,
 And while the white and fiery levin
 Streamed in its wrath
 Across my path,
 My startled stallion broke his girth
 And flung me to the flinty earth—
 When I awakened lame and sore,
 Needing my crutch as heretofore.'

This tale was staggering; listeners hardly knew
 With what amount of credence to receive it;
 Till some one said, 'Of course the yarn is true,
 For not a mortal creature can believe it.'

xv.

A Cracow gownsman, growing jolly,
 Kept up the fun:
 'A wisdom-loving man,' quoth he,
 'Delights to do an act of folly,
 Yet stops at *one*.
 But one was not enough for *me*—
 I did a score,
 Or even more:

At first I sought with rash pretension,
 By diagrams of my invention,
 To formulate a Fourth Dimension—
 But how egregiously I erred!
 The Four Dimensions cannot be—
 I never got beyond the Three.

Then next I tried (yet soon despaired)
 To coax the Circle till it Squared;
 And ever vexingly I found
 It would persist in being round.

At last I had the natty notion
 Of making a machine
 For running by Perpetual Motion:

But though I planned
 A scheme so grand
 That not the like was ever seen,
 Yet ere I solved my final doubt,
 The Sheriff came, and sold me out !¹

XVI.

The ale flowed on,
 Until anon
 A Paris painter, who had reckoned
 To win a medal, first or second,
 Yet who (as gaily he averred)
 Would feel more honoured by a third¹,
 Went to the jug
 And filled his mug ;
 But though he drained it to his Native Land
 (For Frenchmen are for France, you understand),
 Yet with hilarious glee
 He satirized the present tone of taste
 In Paris Art as woefully debased.
 'It is a taste,' he said, 'no longer pure,
 Rejecting Troyon and Couture :
 And so I had a hope,' continued he,
 'That it would welcome *me* !
 My passion was the gloomy grand :
 I cared not that the grass was green,
 Nor that the sky was blue ;
 I sought for luridness of scene,
 For lividness of hue :
 And so, to prove my thesis true
 (And what ambition could be greater?)
 I clambered down a burning Crater ;
 And if I had not choked and fainted,
 I would immortally have painted
 A scene original and new—
 Vesuvius: an Interior View.'

—Whereat, in duty bound,
 We all haw-hawed,
 And caustic laughs went round
 (For critics thus applaud).

XVII.

And then a Yankee, with a nasal tone,
 Said, 'Be it known
 That other countries than my own

¹ The third medal is the least and lowest.

Are tending to material things :
 As witness Venice—where no more,
 As once of yore,
 Her Doges with their marriage-rings
 Espouse the sea ;
 For now,' cried he,
 ' By Jupiter ! you hear a scream
 And then a clatter,
 And see a smoke upon the stream,
 —And what 's the matter ?
 —The Gondola of which you dream
 Is now a Tug, and goes by steam !'

XVIII.

Then, amid quips and smiles and shrugs,
 And much refilling of the mugs,
 A youth who had not spoken yet
 (Though he had kept his whistle wet)—
 A son of Erin, who, I ween,
 Was from the City of Dasheen¹,
 Had roamed (he said) his island over
 To find a sprig of Four-leaved Clover,—
 Yet when he came to where it grew,
 The leaves, instead of four, were two !
 —This Irish bull was so Corkonian,
 That the applause was Pandemonian.

XIX.

Whereat, ere ending of the shout,
 Uprose—magnificently stout—
 A glum Professor from the Cam,
 Who said : ' I freely must admit
 That Britons lack the Irish wit ;
 Our heads are of a thicker grade—
 More stolid, yet perhaps less weak :
 Now I—a dunderhead by trade
 (Like *all* professors, so to speak !)—
 Will show you what a fool I am !
 I had an itching (let me say)
 For things most Attically Greek,
 And so one day
 I took my pay
 And went and hired a ten-oared ship,
 Wherein I made a moonlight trip²

¹ Cork.² From Athens.

Along the shallow stream Ilissus
 And the still shallower Cephissus
 To see the Image of Narcissus—
 But found the beauteous figure flown,
 And in its stead my ugly own!

xx.

This put the roysterers in a roar:
 But I replied,
 'Oh no, it cannot be denied
 That Englishmen have handsome faces,—
 The reason being plain:
 You spring from blue-eyed Northern races;
 Your blood has Scandinavian traces;
 Your Shakespeare's Hamlet was a Dane;
 And Shakespeare's self we proudly call
 The noblest Goth among us all!
 Your Latest Bard of great repute,
 Whose harp as yet is hardly mute,
 Was one whom Norskers love to claim
 As Northern both in heart and name.
 So while his grave was being made
 Where England's greatest dead are laid,
 The pickaxe hewing in the gloom
 Struck sparkles from the flinty tomb¹;
 For all our trolls, with pious care,
 With all their lanterns lit, were there.'

xxi.

The learned Briton then inquired,
 'What know you of this bard of ours?
 For though he was by Heaven inspired,
 Yet as a singer, he was England's own,—
 And, being English to the marrow-bone,
 How, out of England, could his song be known?'
 Then answered I,
 'We knew his gifts—we felt his powers:
 He drank indeed
 From Bragi's cup of heavenly mead;
 And to a bard so high
 All honours we accord
 Save one alone—
 He was a Laureate and a Lord,
 And sang a Throne:
 He bowed too humbly down
 To Sceptre and to Crown.

¹ In digging Lord Tennyson's grave in Westminster Abbey, Oct., 1892, the grave-diggers encountered a rock, which they cut through with great difficulty.

XXII.

'We simple Norskers think a skald
Divinely called
To sing his country's Liberty,
And not—oh not as he,
To wear in courts a gilded chain
And bid the whole world hear it clank;
Nor stoop, like him, to bear the train
Of feudal royalty and rank.
A poet should be free!
We say that sceptre, throne, and crown—
The tyrant's symbols—are to be abhorred
Like tyranny itself, and are to be cast down!
We Norskers have (for yet awhile) a King—
To whom we wish no ill or harm;
Yet Royalty, with us, has lost its charm,
And Kingship is to be an ended thing!
Yea, hither now on flying wing
Its day of doom is coming fast;
For now at last
From fell to fiord, from mount to main,
No more in Norseland shall be known
A King or Throne,
But Freedom shall arise and reign!'

XXIII.

As thus I spake, my rasping strain—
Unwelcome to unwilling ears—
Awoke some sneers,
And even jeers,
With no approving voice save one.
Yet one there was amid the groans,
And I remember still its tones:
For first, ere my harangue was done,
A big shillaleh thumped and pounded
And made confusion worse confounded;
And high above the racket then—
With voice exploding like a gun—
The Son of Erin cried 'Amen!'
—Whereat I flung my cap on high!
—'Hurrah,' quoth I, 'the day is nigh
For Erin's freedom By-and-By!'

Stave Eleventh.

BUBBLE-CHASING,

OR 'HOPE DEFERRED MAKETH THE HEART SICK.'

NANNA'S HEIM (latitude fifty-nine degrees north) is out of the beaten track of travel; no railroad leads to it; few mule-riding parties of tourists invade it; and though it is approachable by water—for the salmon and the sea-trout find their way thither)—yet it is practically out of the world.

It possesses what, at first sight, seems to be a telegraph; but on closer inspection, the wires are used only as an odd but ingenious method of sending small bundles of hay from the hill-tops to the cattle-sheds in the valley beneath.

Even the 'fashions' do not penetrate this sequestered region; and the peasantry still wear the same bright-coloured and quaint costumes which pleased their ancestors in ages past.

An occasional antiquarian from Copenhagen or Upsåla comes to Nanna's Heim on a hunt for runic inscriptions; but the oldest stones in the graveyard have long been illegible.

The original settlement—which dates back probably to the twelfth century, though there are no preserved records older than the fourteenth—seems to have been called Bobo; and the village belfry is still familiarly styled Bobo tower.

I.

'Has no one,' I inquired,
'A tale of Love to tell?'
Whereat a Pomeranian, fired
With memory of his Mirabelle,
Responded tenderly, and said,
'I fell in love and wished to wed:
The maid was beautiful and pure,
And loved me, I was sure;
But *she* was of a noble line,
And *I* was poor;
So, for that noble damsel's sake,
Ere I could ask her to be mine,
I journeyed to Cathay,
And wore my youth away
To find the Jewel of Jamschidd',
But never learned where it was hid;
And she—my unpredestined bride—
Pined in my absence till she died.'

II.

This tale was of a sorry sort,
And had no jest and made no sport;
Whereat a Frisian said, 'I too,
When I was younger, went to woo;

¹ Mentioned by Lord Byron.

But she, the damsel I adored,
Had woman's wit, and she implored
That ere I bought and brought the ring
I first of all would buy and bring
(In token that my love was true)
The Wishing Carpet of Tangoo—
(Which, if you sat upon it, as you know,
Would waft you anywhere you wished to go.)
And so, to please my prudent lass,
I started off upon a mule
(Myself, I think, the greater ass!)
And rode away to Istamboul;
Where not a tongue in town could tell
What merchant had the rug to sell:
And while among the Turks I tarried
To search bazárs,
The maiden jilted me and married!
—I thank my stars!'

III.

Thus through the supper ran a rill of fun,
As if the driblet never would be done:
For table-talk is never like to flag
Where every talker is a witty wag
(Or thinks himself to be);
But while so many voices all were chattering
Each in the language of a different land,
The wit (if wit it were) grew so diffuse,
So helter-skelter, and so scattering,
That I, whose native tongues were three
(With some few added as a smattering),
Found that to listen was of little use;
For I could hardly comprehend a tithe:
So I began to wriggle and to writhe,—
And felt abashed and awkward and unnerved;
Which when the guide
(That shrewd and wily dragoman!) observed,
He squatted at my knee
And, bargaining for a fee,
Made in a whisper a translation
Most cleverly of each narration:
For *he* was not
A Norsker clot,
But Russian, and a Polyglot,
And had a mouth that opened wide,
With twenty languages inside!

IV.

Thus with the merry travellers at their meal
(To which in kindness I had been invited)

I sat an hour or more,
And while the evening wore
I lent my ear as each in turn recited
His crazy tale ;
And now at last,
And while the talk was still increasing fast,
And ere the laughter, with its peal on peal,
Had time to fail,
I sprang to my impatient feet,
And as my task was incomplete,
'Adieu !' I said,
And off I sped,
And left them to their pipes and ale.

V.

—'O thorp of Nanna's Heim,' thought I,
'Thou art a league away, or more,
And now my weary feet are sore !
—Alas, our rest is never nigh,
But lies beyond us, By-and-By.'

Stave Twelfth.

THE PESSIMISTIC PHILOSOPHY,

OR 'VANITY OF VANITIES, ALL IS VANITY.'

THOUGH Valhal (or Odin's hall for slain heroes) is commonly spoken of as the chief palace in Asgard, yet Vingolf divides with Valhal all the honours, splendours, and festivities which can pertain to a *salle de festin* in the 'garden of the gods.'

Vingolf is Freyia's, not Odin's, house.

It is a banqueting hall like Valhal.

Freyia is the Norse Venus ; and she entertains the slain heroes exactly as Odin does : that is to say, half of them feast at *her* table, and half at *his*, and vice versa : for they who are *his* guests on one day, are *hers* on the next.

It was thus a characteristic ambition of the Vikings that the two chief rewards of a brave man should be Glory and Love.

Fimbulfambi is a term of reproach, and means 'the greatest of fools.'

Rind and Ran are Norse goddesses—the first representing the Earth, and the second the Sea.

A Vala is a prophetess ; a Norn is a Fate ; and a Van is a sea-nymph.

I.

Now as I went,
The sky was blent
With faint and fading streaks of red—
Loved of the missel-thrush ;

For while the colours fade he sings,
And when their final flush
Has vanished from the sky,
His voice comes to a hush.

My thoughts were such as twilight brings—
Of solemn, serious, sober things;
Till, as a flock of bats flew by
(The very blindest birds that be),
'Tell me, ye dim-eyed tribe,' quoth I,
'Is it by Nature's own decree
That human creatures are as blind as ye?
Or if it be not Nature's plan,
Is it some scurvy trick of Fate
Which thus foredooms that every man
Shall always have an addled pate?'

II.

I cried, Egad!
The world is mad!
Each mortal is befooled to-day,
And to his sorrow
He learns to-morrow
How great a zany he has been—
To be so archly taken in!

III.

Now though the fowler's net
(According to the Holy Word,
Is ever vainly set
In sight of any bird,
Yet with a man not so,
For to his rue and woe,
Poor wretch, before he is aware,
The lime-twigs have him in a snare!

IV.

Man is a dog, and has his day;
He is of Earth, and not divine;
He is of Hell, or hardly higher;
Indeed he is of Satan's swine,
And wallows in his Master's mire.

V.

A Man is blinder than a mole,—
For the wee delver in the clay,
With meagre sight
And doubtful light,
Is certain not to go astray;

But lordly Man, who sees and knows,
 And who, at every step he goes,
 Thinks that his guiding-light is clearer,
 And that his journey's end is nearer,
 Goes ever errant on his way
 And misses finally his goal!

VI.

Moreover, it most mournfully appears
 That neither any ancient rune nor writing,
 Nor beech-wood book of any Skald's inditing,
 Nor prophecy of Vala, Norn, or Van,
 Can warn the inborn folly out of man,
 Or make him wiser as he grows in years;
 For whether he be young, or in his prime, or hoary,
 His record always is the self-same story—
 A never-varying foolish tale
 Of hopes that flatter and that fail!

VII.

Yea, verily forsooth,
 Not only in his youth,
 Or while his judgement is jejune,
 But in his mellow season
 Of very ripest reason
 He has his self-delusions still;
 Which not the frosts of age can kill
 Nor even nip or chill:
 And so the grey buffoon
 Keeps up his rigadoon,
 As if his heart and mind and will
 Had all been mildewed by the moon!
 Indeed he is the mooncalf's twin:
 He is an ape
 In human shape;
 For though he lacks the antic and the grin,
 He ranks in Nature's heraldry
 As Folly's very next of kin:
 He was, and is, and is to be
 A fool of very first degree:

VIII.

He may not wear the cap and bells,
 Yet something gowkish in him tells
 That in his bonnet is a bee!
 His proud pretence
 Of sober sense
 Is pitiful indeed to see!

He is not *quite*
A Bedlamite,
Whose ravings cannot be restrained
Or pranks prevented
Save under lock and key,
But though not totally demented,
Yet he is richly rattle-brained,
And though he still is left to roam at large,
Yet never would the World permit him to go free,
Save that the World itself is just as mad as he!

IX.

His name is Fimbulfambi—fool indeed!¹
Not of the motley sort
Paid with a prince's pelf,
To make a merry parle
And furnish sport
For king and court
(A kind of folly which the great may need,
And which the wise may profitably heed);
But Man—plain man—the common carl,
Is a poor witling not acutely schooled,
Possessing neither worldly craft nor ken;
And so, instead of fooling other men,
He fools his simple self,
And is a fool who loves to be befooled!

X.

His lunacy, a thing innate,
Is not a craze that will abate
Or soon be past,
But cheats him early, cheats him late,
And cheats him to the last!

XI.

Fooled from the first beginning,
Fooled to the final end,
Waiting for luck, yet never winning,
Deceived alike by foe and friend,
Not knowing how to gather or to spend,
To borrow or to lend,
He boggles, blunders, and goes wrong
His whole life long!
He trips and slips at every stage
From youngest youth to oldest age!

¹ As 'fambi' is fool, so Fimbulfambi is 'the greatest of fools.'

XII.

He thinks that he is canny and is clever,
 And that he ranks among the cunning men :
 And so he may ;
 But this I say
 —Yea, I declare, by all the heavenly powers !—
 That Mortal Man from Adam's time till ours
 Has been a fool, and so will be for ever !
 He is a simpleton—a rantipole—
 A ninnyhammer, dense and dull—
 A stupid, oafish, silly soul—
 A jabberno!e¹—
 Whom every flattering hope can gull
 Or fair allurement can cajole :
 A dolt, who down through all his days
 Has some new maggot in his skull,
 Some new delusion of a kind
 To tickle and torment his mind,
 Until his tortured brain,
 Under the rack and strain,
 Gives evidence—alas ! too plain—
 That in all tribes and races,
 And in all times and places,
 A universal strange insanity
 Runs in the heads of all humanity !

XIII.

Thus in a morbid mood
 I for a while pursued
 My train of cynical reflections ;
 And, musing half aloud,
 I, with a spirit proud,
 Spake in a sneering tone
 Of other people's imperfections—
 Forgetful of my own.

XIV.

Then, with my hand against my breast,
 To quell a rising heart-ache there,
 I asked myself if, like the rest,
 I too, in seeking for the Best,
 Was grasping at the Empty Air ?
 Did I too follow and obey
 The beck of hopes that would betray ?
 What answer could I make ? What could I say ?

¹ This word is more often spelt *jabbernow!*—a spelling which tempts the reader to a mispronunciation. The *o* is long. So too the word *jowl* (in 'cheek-by-jowl') is better spelt *jole* : and, in fact, I would prefer a restoration of the old form *jig-by-jole*, or else *cheek-by-chole*..

I said, oh! woe is me!
The falser all such fancies be,
The more I feel their sorcery!

XV.

They cheat, they cozen, they beguile,
Yet I believe them all the while!
For oh! what cunning shapes they take!
What promises they make and break!
I parch with thirst—they give, to cool me,
The Cup of Tantalus, and fool me!
I faint with fasting—they provide
The Supper of the Barmecide!
I sleep—they shed upon my slumber
A shower of glories without number,
Whereof the brightest and the best
Are sure to prove the emptiest!
I wake—and to my dire confusion,
They tempt me with some fresh illusion,
Whereof the promise gladdens me,
The disappointment saddens me.
And the remembrance maddens me!

XVI.

I roam in Fields Elysian,
Or in Saint Brandan's Isle,
Till Fancy, in derision,
Informs me, with a smile,
That nothing but a vision
Decoys me all the while!

XVII.

Sometimes these visions are so grand,
That all this solid North of mine—
This rocky strand,
These craggy cliffs and promontories,
These pine-clad capes—
Take more than mere terrestrial shapes;
They change to heavenly heights and glories;
As if the Vingolf had been built agen
Upon its early plan,
With arches of immeasurable span
And pillars of a height untold;
Or as if Rind and Ran,
Throned on a mountain's brow,
Under a roof of blue and gold,
Or in a sea-cave hid from human ken,
Were reigning still, as in those times of old

When men were gods, and gods were men :
 (And would that *I* were living then,
 Or *they* were living now !)

XVIII.

—O Golden Year !
 Thy dawn, I fear,
 (Although we dream of it as nigh)
 Is ever to be By-and-By.

Stave Thirteenth.

NIL DESPERANDUM,

OR 'HOPE ON, HOPE EVER.'

THE Egyptian Astarté, the Greek Aphrodité, the Roman Venus, and the Norse Freyia were all, to a great degree, identical goddesses ; for each, in her own mythology, was the supreme type of love and beauty.

Freyia, the Norse Venus, had no son to play the part of Cupid ; but she had two daughters, named Gersamé and Noss.

It is noticeable that Freyia's husband—though she loved him dearly, and though she always wept during all his absences from her—was nevertheless an unimportant personage in these myths : he was called Otto—sometimes Otto Heimski : he was, in fact, a nobody—almost a simpleton : and his chief function in the Odinic fables was to bring into dramatic relief the superiority of his divine wife—who, next to Odin's beloved spouse Friga, was the most eminent of all the goddesses of Asgard.

Freyia is not to be confounded with Frey—who was her illustrious brother, and who during the Viking age (and even for a century afterwards) remained the chief and favourite god of the Swedish side of the Scandinavian peninsula : so that (in those pagan days) Swedish oaths were sworn 'in the name of the great god Frey.'

Frey's beautiful sister, Freyia, had a famous necklace called 'Brisinga'—made of so many brilliant jewels that it flashed with all the colours of the Aurora Borealis.

This necklace was once stolen from Freyia by the Satanic god Loki, and hidden in the sea.

Freyia's chosen champion for its recovery was the god Heimdal the keeper of the Rainbow).

The battle was a strange duel : it was fought beneath the ocean-waves, and the two combatants assumed for the occasion the form of seals !

Heimdal was the victor over Loki, and accordingly the stolen necklace was restored to Freyia.

But the inimitable and coveted trinket has since been lost agen—nobody knows where—though the Norse minstrels are fond of fancying that it will one day be dragged up from some Norwegian fiord or channel-way by some fisherman's net—just as the lost lyre of Orpheus was dragged up from the waters of the River Hebrus.

As to the other lost Norse treasure—namely, the 'hoard of gold' which the dwarf Andvari cursed, and which the dragon Fafnir afterwards guarded on Gnita Heath until he was slain by the demi-god Sigurd—this incalculable

mass of the most precious metal is now the common property of all the skalds, even the poorest, who use it as typical of any impossible gain that excites the greed of mankind.

Like Freyia's necklace, the 'hoard of gold' lies hidden—some say in the Rhine—others, in the Glommen—where it waits to be the prize of some unfortunate finder who, in finding it, must of course inherit the 'curse' that goes with it, and which is fated to be inflicted upon its unhappy possessor.

I.

In sleep I many a time have found
 That jewelled Carcanet
 Beyond all cost,
 Which Freyia lost,—
 That clasped her heavenly neck around,
 But which she heedlessly unbound,
 Till all the jewels were unset
 And sank into the slimy ground—
 Not harmed, but hid away:
 For skalds there be, who say,
 That still the Carcanet is whole,
 And is the same which Loki stole;
 And that in Strelsa Bay
 It shall be found some day.

II.

Moreover—call it fancy if you will—
 These eyes of mine have seen on Gnita Heath
 That other treasure far more precious still,
 Which I have tugged for, and have grit my teeth
 In trying to grub up, and bear away—
 Red gold indeed,
 Red as a glede—
 Which madly I have hoped to count for mine,
 Yet never could succeed.
 Some say the gold
 Now lies at twenty fathoms in the Rhine:
 But others hold
 That it is lying on the Glommen shore,
 In plain and open sight
 And glittering in the light
 Just as it did of yore—
 Waiting till Sigurd¹ come agen, if so he may—
 Or since he knows the treasure to be curst,
 He may not haste, and I shall find it first.

¹ Sigurd was Brunhilda's lover, who rode to her through the fire.

III.

I once imagined, in my fiery zeal,
That I could get my grip on Fortune's Wheel;
But just as I was reaching for the spokes,
The shining wheel proved but a glittering hoax.

IV.

I dreamed I built a Pillar, block on block,
And said, 'Now this is solidness indeed,
And safe to lean on in a time of need,'—
When, to my wonderment, my Pillared Rock
Changed all at once into a Broken Reed.

V.

I thought myself at sea in my kayak,
Not noting that the clouds were growing black,—
But when my boat of skins was struck abeam,
And when the roaring breakers were at hand,
And when my peril grew to be extreme,
I sat aghast—
For I had cast
An Anchor with a Rope of Sand.

VI.

I won a Laurel for my brow,
And proud I was to bind it there,
And felt it wondrous fine to wear,
But then the green illusive bay,
I know not why,
I know not how,
Began to disappear and die,
As when a fog-wreath melts away:
And so I have no Laurel now
—Although I hope my time is nigh
To wear another By-and-By.

Stave Fourteenth.

THE EPHEMERAL ETERNITY,

OR THE TRANSITORY MASTER-PASSION CALLED LOVE.

THE Mälstrom—a vortex formerly invested with indescribable terrors—is nothing but a narrow strait or channel through which a swift tide ebbs and flows with some natural anger, especially when a high wind happens to be blowing against the stream.

The Silver Pit is a deep hole in the North Sea or German Ocean.
'Frodi's Mill' is a pretty myth—old, poetic, and perennial. Frodi was

a fabulous King of Denmark at the time when Caesar Augustus was Emperor of Rome. The peace which then prevailed among all the nations of the world was called in Iceland 'Frodi's peace.' For Frodi had a miracle-working mill (named Grotti) which ground out whatever Frodi wished—peace or war, gold or meal; and it even furnished the fine white salt for salting the sea.

I.

I had a Love, and fondly pressed
The melting maiden to my breast,
And said, as happy lovers do
When passion thrills them through and through,
'Though every other hope I cherish
Should disappoint me and should perish,
Yet Love is lasting—Love is true.
But then I little knew
How Love, despite its vow and ring,
Could prove itself a fickle thing,
Or how its pledge of faith
Could be forsworn!

II.

But Love is mortal from its birth;
It is the offspring of the Earth,
And dies, like all things born!
It is a mountain-wraith—
A vapour of the morn!
It is a kiss and a caress—
And then a doubt and a distress,—
And then at last a nothingness!

III.

I liken Love to our Norwegian Spring—
Sweet while it yet is vernal,
But not to be eternal.
Is Love Eternity? Love is so brief
That it is shorter far than Time!
For Time is long,
But Love is for a day!
—Praised in a song,
It is outlasted by the rhyme!
Love? Name it to me nevermore—
My heart is sore!

IV.

So I will vary now my theme,
And turn me to another dream.

One night I felt the overwhelming power
Of heavy sleep. It was the midnight hour
When dreams are strongest (being new and fresh),
And cause the clammiest creeping of the flesh :

I saw the dim and fathomless abyss
That yawns between the other world and this,
Spanned by the Bridge of Al Sirát—
A wondrous bridge indeed !—
As slender as a spider's thread,
Yet crossed at lightning-speed
By spirits of the newly-dead !

I leapt upon it like an acrobat !
—At every step I took,
It violently shook,
And midway over the great gulf it broke !
Whereat, in sweat and anguish, I awoke !

And now at night I sleep and toss,
Or wake and groan,
In dread of having yet to cross
That chasm—and alone !

Thus, like a haggard witch or crone,
Our Fancy often frightens us too much !
It catches us as with an ogre's clutch ;
Nor can we ever slip
From such a dragon's grip.
We boast that we are free,
But we are held in awe
By what we *think* we see,
As if in sooth we *saw* !
We are enthralled
By what are far too fondly called
Our fine imaginations,
Whose dazzling scintillations
Allure us oft to our mishap—
Like victims to a trap.
Our hopes are baits ; our whimsies, tempting gauds ;
Our visions, make-believes and frauds ;
They mystify,
They feign, they lie :

v.

And, worse than all,
They often in their ultimate intent
Are most malignant, and on mischief bent !

VI.

VII.

VIII.

¹ The Swedish naturalist Linnaeus has gracefully perpetuated this superstition concerning the Bird of Paradise by bestowing on the pretty creature the name *Paradisaea apoda*—the word *apoda* being Greek, and signifying 'without feet.'

As if they came on purpose to deceive me,
And fled for nought except to vex and grieve me.

IX.

So, though I love their witchery well,
I am resolved to break the spell.

Must I be evermore the dupe
Of all the tricks of all the troupe?
Shall I not shut and lock my door
Against this wild and rabble rout,
And do my best to bar them out?
Shall I, whom they have cheated once,
Still trust them as before,
And like a double, treble dunce,
Be doubly, trebly duped, and left to find,
With disappointment sore,
My apples to be golden in the rind
Yet ashen at the core?

—I will be juggled with no more!

X.

Why should I grasp at fancied gains,
To have my labour for my pains?—
Attempting, every day I live,
To gather Sunshine in a Sieve?

XI.

Why should I sweat and groan,
Turning the ponderous stone
That grinds the grist of Frodi's Mill,
Whilst gods and men look on and laugh
To see me ever grinding still,
Producing nought but chaff?

XII.

Why, like a naked Carib,
Or semi-clouted Arab,
Should I go plunge and dive,
And come up less than half alive,
And more than half distraught -
Having, amid the eddy's whirls,
In merest madness sought
Imaginary pearls?

XIII.

Why should I race
At breakneck pace,
With whip and spur, and onward press
As if I rode a steeple-chase—
Yet never for a moment guess,
Until the gallop is concluded,
That I was all the while deluded,
And that the Cup I sought
Was but a thing of nought,
Existing only in my drunken thought?

XIV.

Why should I swagger
With sword or dagger,
And boast and be defiant,
And valiantly my weapon draw
To kill some ogre or some giant
Who proves to be a Man of Straw?

XV.

Why should I range and roam
In hope to find the Pleasure Dome
Of Kubla Khan?
Or think that I can ever trace
The undiscoverable place
Where Alph the Sacred River ran¹?

XVI.

Why should I go
To Roncéveaux,
To hear the blast of Roland's Horn,—
That sounds no more to mortal ear?

XVII.

Why should I fancy I was born
To seek and find Ithuriel's Spear?

¹ Coleridge's celebrated lines which he composed during an opium-sleep were these—

'In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree,—
Where Alph the sacred river ran
Through caverns measureless to man,
Down to a sunless sea!'

XVIII.

Why should I hunt the Unicorn,
 Or chase from crag to crag
 Saint Hubert's Cross-crowned Stag,—
 When no such living thing
 Has on the blessed Earth been seen
 Since Oberon was himself the King
 And had Titania for his Queen?

XIX.

Why should I try, with panting breast
 And with fool-hardy pride,
 To swim the Mälstrom, South or West,—
 Or seek to stride,
 And hope to guide
 With rein or bridle-bit
 Arion's Dolphin to the Silver Pit—
 Thence onward to the Islands of the Blest?

For be those islands West or South,
 Or be they greenly bowered,
 They lie within the Sea-Wolf's frothy mouth—
 And whoso enters there must be devoured.

XX.

Why should I deem that Egypt's Sphinx
 Will ever tell me what she thinks,—
 Since all her fame for being wise
 Comes of her making no replies¹?

XXI.

Why should I try, with mortal ears,
 To hear the Music of the Spheres,—
 Since God Himself has struck them dumb,
 Forbidding them to whizz or hum?

XXII.

Why should I hope to see, with mortal sight,
 The Pillar of a Cloud by day
 And of a Flame by night,—
 Since these no longer wait upon our way
 To guide our feet aright?

¹ The Sphinx is here feminine, in conformity with common parlance: for Greek Art has diffused her image throughout the world as a creature with female breasts: but the Sphinx of Egypt is without these breasts, and is spoken of in that country as masculine.

XXIII.

Why should I hunt the Holy Grail,
Foreknowing that my search must fail?—
For though I be not basely bad,
Yet who is good like Galahad,
Or pure like Percivale¹?

XXIV.

Why should I bruise my bones
By sleeping on the stones
In Orkla or in Okakell,
In Strelsa or in Strevven,
As Jacob once in Haran slept,—
Expecting in my slumber
That Angels without number
Would step agen as once they stepped
With shining feet, and come and go
Upon a Ladder to and fro
Between the Earth and Heaven?

XXV.

—Away, ye idle hopes and dreams,
That have deceived me long enough!
Ye are of thin and flimsy stuff—
Yet strangely strong!

Ye far too long
Have bound me with your viewless chain!—
Ye now shall end your reign!

Who but a fool like me would longer delve and pant,
And toil and strain,
In hope of piling up in everlasting adamant
A tower or fane
On nothing firmer for foundations
Than day-dreams and hallucinations?

XXVI.

Oh that a man were skilled
So that his hands could build
Just what he wished—just what he willed!—

¹ According to a Christian tradition, the Holy Grail, or Sangrael, or sacred cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper, was brought to England by Joseph of Arimathea, and having been lost, was made an object of quest by a number of King Arthur's knights. But the knights, with two exceptions, were men of worldly lusts—which prevented their eyes from obtaining a vision of the cup. The two exceptions were Galahad and Percivale, who, on account of the sanctity of their lives, were each allowed a glimpse of the cup—but a glimpse only.

Till all his Fancy's beautiful creations
Should just as cunningly be wrought
In stony substance as in airy thought!

If Hope could work its own fruition,
How boundless were a man's ambition!
But though to mortals Hope is sweet,
Yet Toil is hard, and Time is fleet,
And Life is short. So, lest I waste
My days and years—that hie in haste—
And lest by heedlessness or sloth
(Or peradventure both)

I finally should fail to earn
The unknown good for which I yearn,
I hereby make a solemn oath,
That in a world of time and sense,
I, who must soon be summoned hence,
Will try to win, while yet I may,
No transient honour of a day
Nor pleasure of an hour—
To wilt and wither like a flower:

XXVII.

But I will seek some better boon
Not perishing so soon—
Some earthly blessing that shall last
Till all my mortal course be past,
And which shall never once meanwhile,
By trick or guile,
Transmute itself from good to ill
(As many an earthly blessing will);
But which, so long as I shall here remain,
Shall be to me a bliss without a bane,
A peace without a pain,
A joy without a sorrow to attend it,
Or shade to mar it,
Or hurt to scar it,
Or mortal accident to end it:
A lifelong heritage for me to keep
With a possession safe and sure,
And a contentment calm and deep.

XXVIII.

For oh, my Heart, if thou be pure,
Thou must despise
A lesser prize!
Thou must condemn a meaner good!
Thou must, with manly hardihood,

Toil only to attain
The very noblest gain,
Or both thy Life and Labour shall alike be vain!

XXIX.

And so, O Soul of mine,
If such a prize is ever to be thine,
Thou must abjure
All glittering shams, all showy cheats;
All flattering, harmful self-deceits;
All the too plausible temptations
That are but dangers in disguise;
All the too-cunning calculations
That circumvent
Their own intent,
And are the lies
Wherewith the wise
Delude themselves before their very eyes;
All tricks that none suspect,
Deceiving the elect;
All the pretended sweets
That are not sweets at all
(For they will turn to gall);
All the high expectations
That only rise to fall;
All the transparent, air-blown, hollow,
Yet spangled bubbles that men follow;
All empty pomp, all vain acclaim,
All the mere nothing of a name;
All pride of place, all the false glory
That glitters, yet is transitory;
All vanity of song and lyre,
Of tongue and pen;
All worldly praise that men acquire
To lose agen;
All riches with their flying wings;
And all the vain and valueless array
Of visionary things,
Which, though ephemeral, feed the fire
Of never-satisfied desire.

XXX.

Now many a mortal, if bereft
Of worldly trifles such as these,
Might think he had but little left
(Except his brimming cup of woe,

Full to its overflow);
 Yet willingly I let them go,
 As pleasures that have ceased to please :
 For somewhere in the world, by land or sea,
 There is for me
 (As well I know)
 Some pearl of greater price remaining.
 A thousandfold more worth the gaining.
 And I will spare
 No toil nor care
 In finding *what* it is, and *where* :
 For be it far, or be it nigh,
 I hope to win it By-and-By.

Stave Fifteenth.

GOD'S ACRE,

OR THE VILLAGE GRAVEYARD.

THE most characteristic symbols or emblems in the Norse mythology are more than huge, more than colossal, and more than gigantic:—such, for instance, as a Sea-serpent that engirdles the Earth, and a Wolf that swallows the Sun.

One of the greatest of these Norse images is Ygdrasil—the great Ash Tree which is fabled to reach from Hell to Earth, and from Earth to Heaven, and to typify the whole Universe, whether of giants, gods, or men.

As Odin is Ygg, so Odin's tree is Ygdrasil; but as Meimir, rather than Odin, was the representative of wisdom, so the symbolic 'Great Ash' is sometimes styled the 'Meima-meider Tree.'

Odin, calling himself Gangleree, and giving himself a spear-wound in his sacred heart, remained hanging for nine days upon Ygdrasil (or the Meima-meider Tree)—giving utterance, all the while, amid his anguish, to sayings known as 'runes'—so called from the Gothic word 'runa,' which means a mystery or secret.

These primal runes, which Odin (or Gangleree) composed whilst he was thus transfixed upon Ygdrasil, were expressions of that recondite knowledge which (as Shelley has pointed out) is 'learnt in suffering' in order that it may be 'taught in song.'

Odin's original and greatest of all possible runes, were the prototypes of a multitudinous variety of lesser runes—which were not sacred, but only mystic—and which were the subsequent inventions of the Bragi-men or skalds.

As Odin was the inventor of poetry, therefore Odin's runes were the primal poems—all other poems which have come after Odin's runes being but faint and far-off echoes of their divine original.

But these echoes and re-echoes have been innumerable.

Hence it happens that Odin's 'Ygg runes'—which were his heart-cries whilst he was hanging upon the tree Ygdrasil—have been variously supplemented, in later times, by the Odinic bards, with a great variety of their own less important utterances;—among which, for instance, may be cited 'Sig runes,' or watch-words for battle and victory; 'Biarg runes,' for the

help of women in child-bed; 'Lim runes,' or medicinal charms; and 'Brim runes,' for good luck at sea.

The primitive runes (or Odin's own primordial utterances) were supposed to be engraven on certain sacred objects—for instance, on the tongue of Bragi, who (after Odin) was the god of poetry; on the point of Gungner, which was Odin's spear; on the breast of Grani, that is to say, Odin's horse; on the swan's-down cap, or 'feather guise,' of Freyia, who was the Norse Venus; on the finger-nails of the Norns or Fates; and on the golden rim of Giallerhorn, which was the trump to be blown on the morning of Ragnârok or Doomsday.

The lesser or secondary runes (which were the inventions not of Odin himself, but of the skalds or poets) were in like manner supposed to be indelibly stamped—some on living creatures, and others on inanimate things;—such as (for example) on the paw of a bear, on the bowl of an ale-cup, on the troth-ring of a maid, on the pillar of a temple, on the arch of a bridge, and on the gate of a graveyard.

I.

The Sun had set in purple state,
And all the royal day, so splendid,
Was now beginning to be blended
 With dim and dusky hues—
The harbingers of dews.

The twilight came—to linger late;
 The Curfew Bell
 At Okakell
Would scarce for yet an hour or more
Begin to rumble out its roar;
It was a time to meditate:
So when I reached the graveyard-gate,
I raised the latch, and in I passed,
And sighed, and sat me down at last
Where many a pilgrimage had ended.

II.

 But though I sighed
 Yet I was hardly sad,
For as a Norsker I had always had
 (Even from early youth)
A tender and a loving pride
In those old crumble-tumble stones uncouth,
Which slanted now a hundred ways,
And which, with dates of ancient days,
Had made the churchyard famous far and wide.

There lay my long ancestral line,
And there amongst the dead
I oft had sat and read
The Sagas, human and divine:

Yea, there to crickets I had oft recited
 Some new-made lay of mine,
 Which people in the thorps had slighted,
 But which the nimble-footed insects heard
 And seemed to understand,—
 For they would hop about me, quite delighted,
 As if they had mistakenly inferred
 That I was just another of their chirpy band.

III.

And now the fennel (herb of grace)
 Gave out its odours at my feet—
 (What other herb is half so sweet?)
 And round me in the glimmering light
 The tall and sacred asphodel
 Stood here and there in yellow bloom;
 While like a snowflake, cheery white,
 The daisy dotted many a tomb.

IV.

Thought I, 'These ancient graves contain
 Inhabitants more numerous far
 Than all who live in every thorp
 From Nanna's Heim to Hyndla Scar,
 From Hyndla Scar to Appendorp,
 And thence to Peif
 And Gammal Geif.'

V.

I then remembered to have read
 How Zeno said,
 To one who asked him 'What is Life?'
 'Go put thy query to the dead!'
 And thus I asked: 'O ye who dwell,
 Each in your narrow silent cell,
 Whether of marble or of brass,
 Or of a rounded roof of grass,
 Tell me, ye tenants of the ground,
 What treasure-trove ye here have found?
 If ye could answer from your clay,
 What would your lips of ashes say?'

VI.

Then while as yet I spake,
 My knees began to shake,

¹ Familiar colloquies between the living and the dead are frequent in the old Norsk poetry—for to the Norsk fancy the Supernatural (as its name implies) is only a superior form of the Natural.

For in a whisper, faint yet clear
(Born of my fancy and my fear,—
And shrilly, like the soughing sound
Of many pines), the buried dead
From under every stone and mound,
With many voices, all as one,
Answered and said:—

VII.

'O thou belated wandering wight,
Now that the cheerful day is done
This place is gruesome in the night,
For we are ghosts, and if we rise
We are a terror to men's eyes!
Besides, have thou a care!
This robe of thine is dripping wet;
A mortal mist is in the air;
Thou seemest strangely to forget
That every day, at set of sun,
In this hot season of the year,
This old and mouldy churchyard here
Is moist with every dead man's sweat—
A dank and clammy dew;
Or rather, not a dew at all,
Since from the sky it does not fall,
But rises from the churchyard-mould,—
And, coming out of graves, is cold!
It now is rising, we perceive,
And since we do not wish thee ill,
We give thee warning—take thy leave!
For if the damp and charnel chill
Should chance to strike thee through and through,
O loiterer, it would work thy rue:
It is a poison—it will kill!'

VIII.

Whereat, upleaping from my seat
(Which was the carved stone
Of one whom I had known—
A comrade of my early days,
I looked about in mute amaze,
Expecting then and there to meet
His spectre in a winding-sheet;
But neither he nor other sprite
In that undarkened night
Was palpable to sight.

But there were noises round me in the air,
And ghostly voices said—or seemed to say—
 ‘Belated man, beware!
 If thou hast come to pray,
 Make short thy prayer!
—This is our second warning—now away!
Begone, lest thou repent thy further stay.’

IX.

Then, though I shook from top to toe,
I answered, ‘Bid me not depart
Till, for the comfort of my heart,
Ye tell me what I wish to know—
For until then I will not go.’

X.

The ghosts, without a shriek or groan,
Or even gibber in their tone,
 This answer gave:
 ‘O carl of curious mind,
 What brings thee here
 To pry and peer
Into the secrets of the grave?
What hopest thou to find?
What mystery wouldst thou clear?’

Now we, the buried dead, rejoice
To interchange with thee a voice—
So stay awhile, if so thou wilt;
But stop thy chattering teeth! be bold
 And of good cheer!
 If thou art free from guilt,
 Then why not free from fear?
A heart, if honest, will be brave,
 And should be self-controlled!
Command thy pulses—be serene,
 Speak—let thy wish be told!
It shall not be a bootless bene.’

XI.

My teeth then chattered all the more!
I stammered, yet I tried to say,
‘Ye souls of mortals passed away,
I feel myself impure—unclean—

Unworthy thus to stand before
 The disembodied and unseen!
 And though with good intent I come,
 I dare not speak, nor yet be dumb!

XII.

Quoth they, 'It would have been a boon
 If thou hadst brought with thee thy kit
 To cheer us with a pleasant tune!

We have no music now,
 Except the swallow's shrilly twit,
 Or shrieking of the coot and loon,
 Or from the mountain's brow
 The plunging of the waterfall,
 Or blast of horns that hunters blow;
 But still the fiddle and the bow
 Is what we love the best of all!

So bring us thine, some stilly night,
 At rising of the harvest-moon,

And if the light
 Be not too bright,
 And if thou play

Some old and once familiar lay,
 We will arise unseen

And dance around thee on this hallowed green;

And ere the dance be done,

Thou shalt have glimpses of us, one by one,—
 Or all together—if without affright
 Thou hast the hardihood to bear the sight.

XIII.

'Meanwhile, it now behoveth thee to know
 That whoso with the dead would speak
 Must rist the runes that long ago

Were first engraven

Upon the eagle's beak,—

Then on the nib of either raven,—

And other runes both writ and sung,
 Which He whom men call Gangleree
 Composed for mortals while He hung
 Upon the Meima-meider Tree.

Nine livelong days and nights hung He!
 And from the branch where He was tied
 He uttered runes until He died!

XIV.

'Alas, the living now indeed
 Pay but a very slender heed
 To these and other sacred things!
 What mortal knows the runes, or how to rist them?
 The World has lost them, and has never missed them!
 It has disdainfully let go its hold
 Of what it prized beyond all price of yore!
 The fruit of Ygdrasyl¹ is plucked no more!
 And now no Norsker clings
 To the old runic lore—
 The lore of priests and kings—
 The lore of Edda's bards and of the skalds of old!
 The ancient faith is fading year by year—
 A loss so sad that *we* lament it *here*,
 Who in our graves are cold.'

XV.

Whereat I suddenly felt bold
 (As when a fool grows instant proud),
 And boastfully I said aloud,
 'I *know* the runes which Gangléree
 Composed while on the Great Ash Tree!
 Their names I will recite,
 And ye shall harken if I say them right:—
 The Ygg runes,
 The Sig runes,
 The Lim runes,
 The Brim runes,—
 The runes on graven shields,
 For winning foughthen fields,—
 The runes on Gungner's point and Grani's breast
 And Freyia's feather-crest,—
 The runes on Bragi's tongue,
 For help of singers while their song is being sung,—
 The runes on Harbard's leather sandal²,
 The runes on Vingthor's hammer-handle³,
 The runes upon the bridge's either end,
 The runes upon the hand that grasps a friend,—
 The runes the bear has on his paw,
 The camel on his hump,
 The tiger on his claw;—

¹ The accent is on the first syllable.

² Harbard was Odin, disguised as a ferryman.

³ Vingthor and Asathor were different names for Thor.

XVI.

'The runes which every Norn
 Wears on her finger-nail
 (That Fate may thus prevail
 Over each creature born,
 Not only over Man
 But over As and Van);—
 The runes around the rim of Giallerhorn,
 Predicting when the dreaded tramp
 Shall sound the Resurrection Morn:—
 Yea, and the runes of Ragnârok,—
 That awful day
 When Heaven and Earth shall pass away;—
 The day when all the Gods shall die
 Save one alone;—
 And He is not of Odin's hall
 But the Great God of all,—
 Who from His solitary Throne
 Shall speak a word that shall create
 A greener earth, a bluer sky;—
 And Who (for so the runes relate)
 Is waiting till His time be nigh
 To dwell with mortals By-and-By.'

*Stave Sixteenth.**A PARLIAMENT OF GHOSTS,*

OR WHISPERS FROM THE UNDERWORLD.

A CHEERFUL view of death was never attained by the Greeks; to whom the realm of departed spirits was the dismal valley of Hades—wherein the ghostly inhabitants wandered about in perpetual discontent.

But no such querulous and woful humour infects the Norse mythology. Never have the Norsemen harboured the Greek dread of death. On the contrary, the Vikings were always eagerly desirous to fall in battle—in order that, by the spilling of their blood in heroic warfare, they might earn their promotion to Valhal: for no human soul except that of a slain hero could be admitted to Odin's paradise.

But even the unheroic and ordinary dead—who have died, not by sword or spear, but by sickness, age, accident, or infirmity—and who have therefore earned no right of entrance to Odin's shining palace of Valhal; but who, on the contrary, have passed to Hela's shadowy realm—are not described in the Eddas as lamenting their lot in the underworld.

Indeed, why should they murmur?

It is the first duty of fatalists to submit to fate.

Accordingly, a striking feature of the early Norse notion of death—a notion which still lingers even among the Christian peasantry—represents the keeping up of a continued intimacy, familiarity, and personal intercourse

between the living and the tenants of the tomb; an intercommunication of a pleasant and not of a gruesome kind.

The primitive religion of a people never wholly loses its power over their descendants, especially among the humbler classes.

It was the mediaeval opinion in Norway that disembodied souls not only retained their individual identity, and not merely cherished their former interests and affections, but actually—and by choice—abode in and about their barrows and graveyards, in order to be in near and daily association with their surviving kith and kin.

This ancient opinion—once a living faith—is still a traditional sentiment, and has no little force among such quaint rustics as to this day wear their mediaeval costumes—for example, notably in the region of the Sætersdal.

All this is the natural result of a pagan religion which had its beginning in ancestor-worship.

The Norwegians for ten centuries have been familiar with the idea of summoning their ancestors from the tomb, and of holding colloquies with the dead on important occasions, touching such topics as the welfare of kindred, clan, or country.

Thus in the Eddaic lays a venerable 'vala' (or prophetess) is called up from her ashes to predict future events.

Also a hero who has been buried with his victorious sword is besought by his daughter to render it up to her; and she receives it from him, and uses it as an Amazon in the land's defence.

Also a son consults his mother's wraith, and obtains from her a ghostly protection from shipwreck, and from the wiles of women.

As a relic of this long-cherished belief, not a few Scandinavian barrows and grave-mounds still continue to be placed near the abodes of the survivors: so that the dead are not 'the departed'; for their spectres literally remain as 'familiar spirits.'

Carl Olaf—who, like every other modern poet, is half a pagan—gives utterance to time-honoured heathen traditions which, however unreasonable, are nevertheless germane to his native and antiquated Thorp of Nanna's Heim.

I.

Thus did I chatter with a bold loquacity,
Until the spectres chid my mad audacity.

'Oh, nay, O ranting boaster, nay!
Thou knowest not the runes!' quoth they;
'To know a rune by name is nought—
The thing to fathom is the thought!

The runes are mystic, and their meaning lies
Beyond the guesses even of the wise:
And only we who wear the flesh no more
Can be the teachers of this mystic lore;
And being dead, we greatly grudge the giving
Of these our subtle secrets to the living.

We seldom deign to makę reply
To questions from a passer-by:
Yet now for thee we have a word
—If we are able to be heard:
For dead men's voices are so weak
That oft the living, we believe,
Can hardly hear a word we speak.

II.

'But on this quiet eve
We now will try
To blow our dusty windpipes clear
And reach thee gently through the ear,
Lest we should fright thee through the eye.

So, first of all, O listener, lie
Full-length beneath this willow-tree,
And be as still as still can be,—
And while the dusk begins to darken
Bend down thine ear to us and hearken;
And deem thyself, in listening so,
A favoured mortal to receive
A message from the dead below.'

III.

So down among the graves I lay,
And though my terror was profound—
Beyond all former dread and fear—
Yet close against the mossy ground
I pressed my eager ear,
And held it there, so whist and near,
That I could catch the faintest sound;
And whilst the dusk fell darkly round
I heard the dead distinctly say:—

IV.

'O living man, we clods of clay
Were once like *thee*—we sought what *thou*
So ignorantly seekest now.
We spent a lifetime each, in quest
Of what in all the world was Best;
But as to what the Best might be,
No two among us could agree:
So each, according to his whim,
Pursued what seemed the Best to him.

V.

'Some sped the plough,
And spent their thankless toil
Upon the self-same soil
That hides them now:

Others, with wilder likings
And souls more free,
Followed their sires the Vikings
And ploughed the sea—

(To find at last their graves
Not here, but in its waves).

VI.

'Some dug for gold—
First for a little, then for more,
And with a growing greed
Heaped up a hundredfold
Beyond their use or need:

Others were poor indeed,
And all their worldly stock and store
Consisted of the rags they wore;
Though now the difference, once so vast,
Between the rich and poor is past,—
For here they now are both alike at last.

VII.

'Some (who were children) found their joys
In merely childish sports and toys:

Others, when they were young no more,
Were still as childish as before,
And spent their precious hours
In building lofty towers,
Yet all of sand;
Till every wall
And pillar tall,
Having no strength whereby to stand,
Had nothing else to do but fall.

VIII.

'Some wished for Wisdom; others just desired
A fresh new Pleasure when an old one tired.

IX.

'Some strove for things of sounding name—
Like Pomp and Glory, Power and Fame:

Others for things thought little of—
Like Truth and Virtue, Faith and Love:
A few (not many) tried to live
Supported by an inward stay
(Drawn, as they boasted, from above),
Not caring what the world could give,
Nor what the world could take away.

X.

'But each, whatever was his aim,
Was doomed to miss it all the same :
It mattered not a jot or tittle
Whether we strove for much or little :
We always murmured at our lot ;
Our lives were spent
In discontent ;
We each desired—we knew not what ;
We sought it, but we found it not—
For while we struggled, hoped and sighed,
Our days were ended, and we died.'

XI.

—As thus they spake, I thought they moaned,—
But it was I, who sighed and groaned ;
For through my body crept a chill,
And yet I lay and listened still.

XII.

'The grass is wet,' quoth they, 'Arise !
Trace out the letters on this stone ;
And if, despite the dusk, thine eyes
Have light enough whereby to read them,—
O pilgrim, ponder them and heed them.'

XIII.

Dim was the legend—time had half effaced it :
But when with patience finally I traced it,
The words were simple—they were these alone :

*'O passer by,
Hope as thou wilt, toil as thou must,
The end of all things is the dust,
And thou must die.'*

XIV.

I answered, 'This I know full well—
Much to my dole :
What else, ye Dead, have ye to tell ?
What of the Soul,
And of its flight to Heaven or Hell ?

XV.

'Vain is thy question,' they replied,
'For where those fabled countries be
We know not,
And thither, though our ghosts are free,
We go not :

We still abide
 Here where we died ;
 Here is our last long home ;
 Our mansions are these mounds ;
 Here through the livelong day
 In quietude we stay,
 And if at night we venture out,
 Impelled by some desire to roam,
 We merely flit about
 Through these familiar churchyard-grounds,
 Or softly stray,
 As spirits may,
 Each to his own most cherished spot—
 Perhaps to the beloved cot
 Where he was born, or where the tear
 Fell finally upon his bier—
 That farewell tribute which to *us*, the Dead,
 Is ever after dear,—
 So dear, that in our grimy bed
 We lose remembrance of it not,—
 For it reminds us, lying here,
 How they—the tender-hearted—
 Who wept when we departed—
 Shall each in turn, as time draws nigh,
 Come here to join us By-and-By.'

Stave Seventeenth.

THE CROWN OF LIFE,

OR THE ULTIMATE SATISFACTION OF THE SOUL.

It may seem strange that the early Norsemen—who were full of life and action—should have been fond of death and the grave.

But it was a Norse belief that the dead themselves were greatly in love with their mounds, barrows, cromlechs, and tombs.

Unlike the discontent which the Greeks gave to all their ghosts, the Norsemen bestowed upon their dead a tranquil mind.

When a noted Norwegian died—(say some hero or leader)—his partisans had not the shadow of a doubt that he enjoyed a certain grim solace in his sepulchre; that his subterranean quarters, however limited, were congenial to their occupant; that he remained willingly underground because the infernal world (or 'Niffleheim') was a much cheerier place than the Greeks took Pluto's realm to be.

The Greeks were sullen and moody in the Vale of Asphodel, and wished to come back agen to the cheerful light of the upper world.

The Norsemen, on the other hand, gave no sigh of discontent with what they found under the daisies and the green sod.

Their narrow house was not a prison; they could leave it without difficulty or effort; they were free to come and go; and they freely went and came.

What they especially loved was to receive ceremonious visits at their mounds from their surviving kith and kin—to whom they gave advice on critical occasions, and foretold future events.

The buried dead, therefore (according to the ancient Norse creed), were not without active consciousness.

The customary sphere of their flitting to and fro was the near neighbourhood of their barrows and cairns—of their native villages and cots.

There was nothing sad in their estate as departed spirits.

On the contrary, long before these primitive pagans had ever heard of Christianity or of St. Paul, they had discovered for themselves that 'to die is gain.'

Of course, during the Viking age (say the ninth century) every bloody-minded Berserker wished to die in battle—in order that his soul might be at once transported by Valkyries to Valhal.

But the Viking period was a mere episode in the history of the Norsemen.

After this episode was over, the antecedent, ancient, and characteristic Gothic religion resumed its tranquil ascendancy over the Norse mind. The Norse ambition to die a sanguinary death faded away, and the average Norseman (like the ordinary man everywhere) wished to live long, and to die in peace.

It is noticeable that no note of regret pervades the Eddaic poetry concerning death and the tomb.

What was the reason for this brave and cheery faith?

The reason is worth noting—for it is profound.

The dead man—who could think and speak in his sepulchre—and who could, at will, come forth from its 'ponderous and marble jaws'—was waiting till his 'great change should come.'

The dead knew that not only they themselves had died, but that even the very gods—the great Twelve of Asgard—were likewise mortal and must die; that the worn-out and wasted earth was to experience, first its Fimbul-winter—then its Ragnârok—and finally its Renovation;—that in its Renovation it was to become, not a Christian and spiritualized Heaven, but a flesh-and-blood yet idealized Earth—with a bright summer—a mild and cheery winter—harvests without the trouble of planting, but only of reaping—no more 'accursed thirst of gold'—no poverty—no crime—yet a real and workaday world—with hunger and food—with game to hunt—with fish to catch—with tablets to read—with a past to remember—and with a future to await.

To what, therefore, are the buried dead looking forward?

They are looking forward, not only to the end of the world (which they believe to be near at hand), but to the new Universe, on which their souls are set.

It is coming to-morrow!

This is the animating view which prevails down underneath the grave-stones, and which constitutes for the dead what is called 'the patience of hope.'

It is this view that explains how and why the peasantry of the Strelsa Dal think it no strange thing that the spirits of their ancestors should now and then arise from the Bobo burial-ground, and should seem to join with the villagers in dancing on the village-green.

I.

'But is there then,' demanded I,
'No Other World for those who die?'

II.

Quoth they, 'Be not appalled!
 Be not oppressed with any dark misgiving!
 The Other World, so-called,
 Is just the world wherein you now are living!
 It will not be another, but the same—
 Not changed a whit from what it was before,
 Nor even altered in its ancient name:

For on and on, and evermore—
 Down through the future as of yore—
 It shall be styled the same old Earth:
 Man has no Other World than here:
 This is his first—his final sphere.

The million other orbs that fly
 With greater glitter through the sky
 Are the illustrious dwelling-places
 Of other and less mortal races,
 And not reserved for man,
 Whose modest globe (a star
 Less huge than others are)
 Has merely just sufficient room
 To be his dwelling and his tomb!

Some call it under curse and ban,
 But grievously they misconceive it;
 For truly be it said:
 The Earth, by Nature's kindly grace,
 Is such a green and pleasant place,
 That both the Living and the Dead
 Must equally be loth to leave it.'

III.

'Then blessèd be the Earth,' I cried,
 'And blessèd, more and more,
 Be this best piece of it—my joy—my pride—
 My darling native shore!—
 Which now is stirred with vague alarms.
 —Ye spirits, tell me, Is the hour at hand
 When every Norsker must be called to stand
 For Freedom and the Fatherland?
 And tell me, Must the peasants quit their farms
 And spring to arms?
 And tell me, Shall the Golden Lion win?'

IV.

The dead replied :
‘We who have died
Are keepers of the peace.
We say to thee,
And to thy brethren, Keep it Ye !
Wake not the trumpet’s din !
God has His day for wars to cease—
Which is, ere they begin !

Your farms are not for battle-fields—
The land is to be free
Without the help of swords and shields ;
Freed by a nobler strife
Than wound for wound, and life for life !
The crime on Earth which Heaven the most abhors
Is blood of brothers, shed in civil feud !
Let not your fields be thus imbrued !
Let no such blood be shed !
Disturb ye not the Dead
By such unholy wars !’

V.

The spectres of a sudden hushed their strain,
And seemed to shudder with prophetic pain.
‘Speak on,’ I said,
‘And tell me more—
If not of Freedom’s rise (or fall),
Or of the Country’s call—
Speak of yourselves, ye hallowed Dead !
Speak, I implore !
I marvel that ye speak at all !
Speak, though ye threaten and appal !
Oh, say, ye in the darkness there,
Down in the damp and cold,
Out of the light and air,
How do ye fare ?
Speak ! let the truth be told !’

VI.

Then, to my glad surprise
(For I had now been growing bold,
Or not so paralyzed with fear),
They spake more freely than before,
And said, ‘Though shut may seem the door
Of this our habitation here,—

Though darkness be our home,—
 Though dust be in our eyes,—
 Yet is our sight as clear
 As if we gazed from Friga's dome
 In heavenly Fensalir¹:
 For upward through our graves of green,
 With vision keen
 We peer into the throbbing breast
 Of every pilgrim who draws near
 Or sits awhile to rest.
 And so, O vagabond, we peep
 With scrutiny so deep
 Into thine own and inmost heart
 That we can see and search its very core;
 And often have we seen and searched it heretofore!
 If thou demand a proof—a test—
 Be this the sign:

VII.

'This robe of thine,
 Though of a pattern odd and queer,
 Is far from making thee appear
 A stranger in this ancient burial-place;
 Here lie the fathers of thy race;
 Here have thy field-mates slept for many a year;
 Thou knowest every stone.
 Think not, because of thy disguise,
 To come and pass not plainly seen,
 Nor truly known;
 For were thy gown the gaberdine
 That garmented the Wandering Jew,
 It could not cloak thee from our view!
 We know thee well enough,
 And well we love thee, too:

VIII.

'Thou art the Bard of Nanna's Heim,
 Whose rhyming wit
 And rosined kit
 Full often gave us pleasant sport
 Ere yet our frolics were cut short!
 So though thy voice be rough,
 And though thy rhymes be hard,
 And though they pass for rustic stuff
 Not worthy of the world's regard,

¹ The abode of the goddess Friga—the palace of Odin's wife.

Yet since thou often dost rehearse
 Our names and virtues in thy verse ;
 And since a minstrel's mind
 (However low his lot may be),
 Yet ever from the Great Ash Tree
 Receives the help of Gangléree
 And so is rendered quick to learn.—
 We therefore are inclined
 To teach thee what thyself in turn
 Shalt teach thy fellows ; heed us, then.—

IX.

'Whilst yet we lived with living men
 We always had, like thee, a dread
 Of being gathered to the dead ;
 The boldest of us felt a fear
 At lying in a lodgement here :

But to our sweet delight and wonder
 Here in the turf that we are under,
 Housed close together, yet asunder,
 We find, each in his narrow space,
 A boon which not in all the round
 Of God's wide footstool has a place,
 Save only in the grave's own blessed bound.

For life bestows upon the living
 No gift which they may gauge or measure,
 Or which they hoard or treasure,—
 So worthy of a human heart's thanksgiving
 As is the final gift instead
 Which Death bestows upon the Dead !

X.

'The Earth to mortal man is fourfold blest :
 Blest in his birth, though he be born to grief ;
 Blest in his term of life, for this is brief ;
 Blest in his death, which is his sweet relief ;
 And finally, for ever, and in chief,
 Blest as the place of his Eternal Rest—
 And this, of all his blessings, is the best !

XI.

'It is a boon unknown
 Save to the dead alone !
 Here, underneath this hallowed sward,
 We find our last and chief reward !

No prize for which in life we strove
 Equals its *after* treasure-trove:
 But what it is that we have found
 Cannot be guessed above the ground;
 Nor shall we blab it. So, farewell—
 Depart—and tease us not to tell
 What never yet the dead have told,
 Albeit questioned from of old!

XII.

'Go, mortal, till the happy day
 When thou shalt hither come to stay!
 —That day, with its immortal cheer,
 Will soon be here!

XIII.

'Meanwhile, O humble poet, if it fret thee
 To find the Earth not ringing with thy name,
 And if the Living slight thee and forget thee,
 Yet never mind—keep singing all the same!
 There is for thee a laurel not to wither!
 For we, the Dead, shall keep alive thy fame;
 And when thou finally returnest hither,
 We shall salute thee with thy just acclaim!
 Now go—this warning is the last—begone!'

XIV.

But willingly would I have stayed till dawn,
 To put a hundred questions to the ghosts
 As to those dim illimitable coasts,
 Those misty Meadow-Banks of Asphodel
 Which, be they Heaven or Hell,
 Must still to me remain
 (Until I tread that shore)
 The same unsolved enigma as before!

XV.

For oh! though golden was the chance I had
 To ask the spooks to make the mystery plain,
 Yet I was such a stupid cad
 That my bewildered brain
 Denied me at the moment what to say;
 And even to this very day
 I still deplore
 That with an opportunity so great
 My laggard wit should have arrived too late.

XVI.

So, like the sudden snapping of a thread,
My one and only parley with the dead
Came to a close ;
And I arose,
Shook from my gown some glittering drops of dew,
Glanced up at Friga's yet undarkened dome
(That now began to show a star or two),
Took up my wallet and my staff anew,
And was about to hie me to my home
(Which ~~now~~ was nigh) ;
When, with a sudden clash above my head,
The Bell of Bobo Tower
Swung out with all its power !

XVII.

The bell hangs high,
Yet it was hit so hard
That all the burial-ground beneath was jarred ! .
This is the only Curfew Bell
In all the Ampt of Okakell,
And twenty thorps can hear it well.
And now it rang,
With bang and clang,
In signal of the Curfew Hour
(A custom which in Nanna's Heim
Was fixed in mediaeval time
By Eric¹ and his Danes,
And where it still remains).

XVIII.

Right well I knew the iron tongue,
And oft had climbed to where it hung.
It never woke my fear before,
But now I shuddered at its roar ;
For now I thought how oft the bell had rung
With slower hammer and more solemn chime,
Whilst all the gathered mourners of the Ampt,
From far and near,
Each with uncovered head,
Each with a sigh or tear,
Had through the same old churchyard tramped,
Bearing with measured tread
Some dalesman on his flowery bier
Down to his grassy bed.

¹ This was King Eric III of Norway—who was also King Eric VII of Denmark—and who reigned as the joint sovereign of Norway and Denmark in the fifteenth century.

XIX.

I stood and listened in the gloom,
 Until the echoes of the boom
 All seemed to warn me as they rolled
 That / should be the next for whom
 The knell of requiem would be knolled!
 I shivered with an icy cold!
 The mortal mist was rising fast!
 It froze me stiff—I stood aghast—
 My pulses stopped—I held my breath!
 'The Crown of Life,' said I, 'is Death!
 It may be far—it may be nigh—
 But I shall win it By-and-By.'

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QUEENED, UN-QUEENED, AND RE-QUEENED,

OR THE STORY OF CHARLEMAGNE AND HILDEGARD.

(AIX-LA-CHAPELLE, A. D. 771-783.)

WITHOUT entering into the etymological inquiry whether the Emperor Charlemagne derived his soubriquet from *Karl-mann* (signifying 'The Strong Man') or from *Carolus Magnus* (signifying 'Charles the Great')—it is enough for the reader of the following ballad to remember that this celebrated monarch was both Kaiser and King: that is, Kaiser of Germany, and King of France.

THE maiden Hildegard one morn,
While driving cows to grass,
Was startled by a hunter's horn—
And saw the Kaiser pass.

The royal Nimrod checked his steed
And lagged behind his band,—
And since the maid was fair indeed,
He kissed to her his hand.

'Who is thy father?' asked the King:
'Thy cattle—whose are they?'
Whereat the maid—a timid thing—
Turned round and ran away!

When Kaiser Karl rejoined his hunt,
His huntsmen all perceived
That he was gayer than his wont,—
Yet many a sigh he heaved.

He jested with his merry men,
And blithely slew his boar,—
And yet he sighed, and sighed agen,
And still kept sighing more!

All day his heart was in a whirl—
Explain it whoso can—
For who could guess that such a girl
Had vanquished such a man?

How strange that such a barefoot maid—
Scarce older than a child—
And in a russet gown arrayed—
Should make a warrior wild!

But Nature moulds no mightier power
To quell a King, forsooth,
Than just a damsel with the dower
Of beauty and of youth.

This kingliest of the Kings of France
Told oft in after days
How he surrendered to the glance
Of her who fled his gaze!

And not the leap of horse or hound,
That morn—(so he confessed)—
Was equal to the sudden bound
He felt within his breast!

It was a pang!—it was a thrill!—
It pierced him through and through!—
It wrought upon his wish and will
As only Love can do!

'So fair and pure a maid,' thought he,
'Shall grace a royal line!—
Nor will she be of low degree
When she is wife of mine!'

The Kaiser of the Iron Crown
Then set her on his throne,—
Where thus to Valour's bright renown
Was added Beauty's own.

But Calumny and Spite and Spleen,
And other Imps of Hell,
Are ever lurking round unseen
Where happy lovers dwell.

The Kaiser's meek and modest bride—
All innocent of wrong—
Was soon and sorely to be tried,
And doomed to suffer long.

In envy of her rising star,
The jealous dames at court
Were piqued to find her fairer far
Than rumoured by report.

Meanwhile, as plain in her attire
In palace as in cot,
She set the hearts of men on fire,—
Although she knew it not.

'I love thee fiercely!' Taland said:
'My Tower is on the Rhine—
Oh! flee the cold young Kaiser's bed,
And ride with me to mine!'

'Thou wretch!' she cried, with quivering lip,
'How durst thou be so base?'
Whereat she raised her riding-whip
And slashed him on the face!

'And were the King' (cried she) 'to know
For what thy face doth bleed,—
Thou hast not blood enough to flow,
To expiate thy deed!'

Then Taland—to forfend his shame—
Accused her to the King—
Who—(prone to credit woman's blame)—
Snatched off her wedding-ring,

And cried, 'O woman false!—unclean!—
Be thou my wife no more!
Be thou a beggar—not a queen!
I drive thee from my door!

'But go not to thy honest sire—
Lest *he* should spurn thee too!
Go wallow in the mud and mire—
As other harlots do!'

She listened—but she neither spake,
Nor shed a drop of brine!
A heart may ache—a heart may break—
And yet may make no sign!

Forth from her palace and her crown—
The purest of the pure—
She fled disguised—and roamed the town
Among the sick and poor.

To many a loathsome, squalid place
She daily went and came,—
But never showed her hooded face,
Nor ever told her name.

Such power from Heaven upon her fell
That at her holy touch
The deaf could hear—the sick grew well—
The lame flung down the crutch.

And they on whom such cures were wrought
By one in such disguise,
Believed her, in their secret thought,
An Angel from the skies.

Then Taland, who was racked in mind,
And filled with devils seven,
Was smit of fever, and grew blind,—
Scourged by the wrath of Heaven.

He sat beside the King's highway,
And begged his daily bread,—
And Hildegard laid moistened clay
Upon his eyes and said :

'O perjured creature, dost thou know
Who is it blesses thee?
Thou art forsworn—yet rise and go—
Be blind no more, but see!'

Then Taland's guilty soul was stirred,
And his remorse was keen ;
For ere the blind man saw, he heard,—
And knew it was the Queen !

And when he saw her, he was cowed,
And sank upon the ground,
And kissed her garment's hem, and vowed
She should agen be crowned.

He hurried to the Kaiser's hall,—
And there, on bended knee,
He told the maddened monarch all,—
And cried, 'Oh woe is me !'

The furious King could hardly list
Until the words were said,
But clenching his avenging fist
He smote the traitor dead.

He called his councillors in haste,
And at the council-board
Quoth he, 'We have no time to waste !—
The Queen must be restored !

'Send out a herald up and down
Through street and lane to say,
The Queen is hidden in the town!
Let her appear straightway!

'And I, with welcome fit and due,
Will greet Queen Hildegard,—
For never was a wife so true
Who had a fate so hard !

'Ye Burghers, hang your banners out!
Fill all your founts with wine!
Receive your Empress with a shout,
And join your joy to mine!

'Ring all your bells until they crack!—
For I, the King, proclaim
That she shall come in honour back—
As forth she fled in shame!

'To-day, beneath the noon-day sun,
While all the heavens are bright,
Let justice to the Queen be done,
In all the City's sight!'

Thus to the Council spake the King,
And bade them write it down,
And sign it with his signet-ring,
And cry it to the town.

Then through the startled streets, that morn,
The Kaiser's herald went,
And as he went he blew a horn
And told the King's intent.

No town was ever so amazed
By such a strange decree,—
And people from their windows gazed,
To see what they could see.

'Ope every casement,' cried the crier,
'That so the Queen may hear,—
And let her do the King's desire,
Who bids her now appear!

'For now, in scarlet robes of state,
With plumes of mazarine,
The Kaiser at his Gilded Gate
Stands waiting for his Queen!'

Meanwhile, for nigh an hour or more,
Queen Hildegard—who heard—
Paced up and down her garret-floor
And answered not a word.

Her rapture—sudden and complete—
Was silent and divine!
A heart may beat with joy too sweet
To show it by a sign!

Agen, agen her name was called !
The call must be obeyed !
And yet she shrank, and felt appalled—
So down she knelt and prayed.

The feeblest heart may borrow force
By begging it in prayer ;—
And up she sprang, and sped her course
Straight to the Royal Square.

She tried (although the mob was great)
To reach that turret old
Where Kaiser Karl—in robes of state—
Stood at his Gate of Gold.

In struggling thither through the press
Her baffled speed grew slow,—
For little did the people guess
Whom they were hindering so !

She walked unrecognized, unknown,
With covered head, low-bowed—
Until, while yet the horn was blown,
An urchin in the crowd

Caught sight of her, and gave a yelp !
'This is the Queen !' cried he :
'This is the Angel by whose help
My voice was given to me !

'I was a dumb-boy from my birth !
She loosed my tongue, one day !
She is an Angel on the Earth !
She is the Queen, I say !'

Then, louder than a thunder-clap,
Out burst the people's cheer,—
And every man flung up his cap
And cried, 'The Queen is here !'

Whereat the whole great noisy throng
Were hushed to instant awe,—
For as the Lady stept along,
What was it that they saw ?

The Kaiser saw it with the rest,—
Though such a sight agen
May never—(it must be confessed)—
Be seen with human ken.

For lo! the legends all declare
 How in her russet gown
 The hooded Queen—whose feet were bare—
 Walked tiptoe through the town,—

And how the pavement at her tread
 Burst into flowers full blown,—
 And how a halo crowned her head
 Just as she reached her throne¹!

¹ If a grave historian can put faith in this ecclesiastical legend, surely a romancing balladist need not apologize for its incredibility. Mentzel, in his *History of Germany*, seems to imply that certain particulars of the tale are not wholly traditional, but partly authentic. He says:—

‘Beauty and virtue, rather than noble birth, guided Charlemagne in his choice of a wife.’

This statement Mentzel then proceeds to illustrate by pointing to the marriage of the Kaiser with the young maiden Hildegard—who had sprung from a humble origin in Wurtemberg—and whom, in fact, the legendary tales of the time designated as a Swabian peasant-girl.

The story given in the above ballad is set forth by Mentzel as follows:—

‘One of Charlemagne’s courtiers—Count Taland—furious at having been scornfully repulsed by the Kaiser’s young Queen Hildegard—to whom the Count had ventured to offer illicit love—accused her to the Kaiser of infidelity. Her imperial spouse put her away. . . . She led a life of great sanctity—devoting herself to the care of the sick. . . . One day she happened to encounter Taland, who was helplessly wandering about the streets, totally blind. She restored to him his sight. The wretched man—full of remorse—confessed his guilt, and the Queen was re-instated on the throne.’

To Mentzel’s remarks as above given, the following historical memoranda may be usefully appended:—

Charlemagne was born at Salzburg in Bavaria, A. D. 742.

His accession to the crown was in 768—at the age of twenty-six—his empire consisting of the half of Germany and the whole of France.

He immediately married, as his first wife, the Princess Desiderata of Lombardy, whom (for political reasons) he divorced on finding that she could bear him no successor.

Then, in 771—in his twenty-ninth year—a youthful veteran in military victories—he married the humble girl of the foregoing poem—the Swabian Hildegard; who, instead of fortune or rank, had beauty and worth.

Certain feudal-minded writers—thinking it necessary to confer upon this noble woman something more than her own inborn and natural nobility—have taken pains to give her an ancestral title by calling her the daughter of Godfrey, Duke of Swabia—though Swabia had no dukes till after the death of Charlemagne, and never had a Duke Godfrey at all!

After Hildegard’s marriage to Charlemagne, she lived twelve years, and died in 783—leaving him three sons: namely, Louis, Charles, and Pepin.

The subsequent history of these three sons was as follows:—

Louis was his father’s colleague in the government and the inheritor of the throne; and is known in French history as ‘Louis le Débonnaire.’

Charles was King of Lorraine.

Pepin was King of Italy.

It was quite natural that a woman of great beauty and proved sanctity—the wife of an Emperor, and the mother of three Kings—should have

THE ELYSIAN FIELDS.

A MONOLOGUE.

IN Paris, on the afternoon of October 8, 1894 (being the second anniversary of Lord Tennyson's death), a meeting was held by 'The Creepmouse Club' to drink a 'Bragi-cup' to his memory.

The laureateship, which his death had left vacant, had not yet been filled; and the Queen's long delay in filling it gave currency, for a time, to the opinion that she probably meant to abolish the office—or at least that, without any direct action on her part for its annulment, she would quietly let it lapse into the limbo of things obsolete.

The following poem—which was read to the club on the anniversary just referred to—touched incidentally on this popular expectation.

In now reprinting this poem in this volume, in 1897—three years after the appointment of Mr. Alfred Austin as Lord Tennyson's successor—it seems just and proper to mention that the 'Creepmice,' at the first meeting of their club after Mr. Austin's elevation, took a friendly opportunity to pledge the new laureate in a 'Bragi-cup,' accompanying their toast with every good wish for his success.

I.

O SINGER of the mournful Lay¹
Wherein thy words were each a tear
Shed on thy Friend's too early bier,—
I turn me to thy song to-day.

II.

Twice round the sun the earth hath rolled
Since on that weird October night
The moon arose with all her light²
To guide thee to the Bards of Old.

III.

And in their dusky, dim domain
Thy earthly spirit, now divine,—
Although the latest of their line,
Is not the least among their train.

become the miracle-working heroine of a church-legend, a thousand years ago.

Nevertheless, the Hildegard of the present ballad—and who figured as far back as the eighth century—is not to be confounded with the better-known and later Saint Hildegard of the twelfth, who was Abbess of St. Rupert's Mount, near Bingen on the Rhine, and whose recorded visions, dreams, and ecstasies are a part of the devotional literature of the Church of Rome.

¹ Tennyson's *In Memoriam*.

² During Tennyson's last moments, on the night of October 8, 1892, the full moon (which was uncommonly clear) shone into his chamber and upon his bed; and the venerable laureate passed away, holding in his hand a copy of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*.

IV.

O thou who in this mortal sphere
Wert comrade to each flower and stone,—
And wise in all that could be known
Of Nature and her varying year,—

V.

How far hast thou pursued thy quest
In that strange Meadow, faint of hue,
Where every vista is a view
Of some dim Region of the Blest?

VI.

And are we still to understand
That *there* the flowers are ghostly grey,
And that the apples fall away
To sudden ashes in the hand?

VII.

Departed poet, sacred shade,
Speak from thy Bower of Asphodel,
And through some runic utterance tell
What new discoveries thou hast made!

VIII.

Grown well acquainted with thy tomb,
Now tell us from thy hallowed dust
If Death be proved a fate so just
That men should hail it as their doom!

IX.

After this earthly life is done,
Is all its fever wholly past?—
Or, with its purpose but re-cast,
Is there a new career to run?

X.

Is Death the end of toil and strife,
Or is the transfer but a change
To realms of wider reach and range,
With larger issues than in Life?

XI.

Do we go on from star to star,—
Or, captive to our place of birth,
Shall we still dwell upon the Earth,
Where all our first affections are?

XII.

Our first affections!—What are *they*?
Will they abide, or must they pass?
—And what we call our Heart, alas!
Is it not doomed to die away?

XIII.

And is our Mind our very own?
Shall it immortally be ours,
Endowed with never-wasting powers,
And Reason ever on its throne?

XIV.

If so, O thou whose life was long,
And whose career was full and round,—
What further topic hast thou found
For the continuance of thy song?

XV.

Say from thy larger knowledge now,—
In what fine balance thou dost weigh
The honour of a poet's bay,—
So nobly worn upon thy brow?

XVI.

Do Kings and Queens delight thee *there*?
And art thou laureate unto *them*?
Do sceptre, throne, and diadem
Still daze thee in that misty air?

XVII.

And what to thee said Guinevere?
And are her sorrowing eyes still wet?
And Launcelot,—doth he love her yet?
And hath he there his horse and spear?

XVIII.

And doth he tilt in some disguise?—
And doth he in the shadowy list
Win some immortal amethyst,
And carry straight to *her* the prize?

XIX.

Hath Cleopatra's wound yet healed?
Or did the asp so bite and mar
Her bosom that it shows a scar?—
And hast thou seen Achilles' shield?—

XX.

Is Helen fair as in the flesh?—
Or is she wasted with the shame
Wherewith her guilt still keeps her name
In ignominy ever fresh?

XXI.

Hast thou discoursed with Socrates?—
And did his hemlock prove a balm?—
And is Xantippé's tongue grown calm?—
And is she now less hard to please?

XXII.

Is Danté wandering still afar
From Beatrix?—or are the twain,—
After their earthly love and pain,—
Now twinned at last, like star to star?

XXIII.

And Raphael,—doth he now complain
That death stole on him all too soon,
And spoilt his pencil and cartoon
And the best fancies of his brain?

XXIV.

Doth grim old Charlemagne now smile
When little children, hand in hand,
March up and down, a joyous band,
Above him in his old church-aisle¹?

XXV.

Doth great Napoleon, to his rue,
Haggard, and pale, and discontent,
And with his heavy brow down bent,
Still mourn the loss of Waterloo?

XXVI.

And Byron—is he hushed in peace,
Or doth his mighty music still
Roll down from Missilonghi Hill
And echo through the Isles of Greece?

XXVII.

(Can such a harp as his be dumb?)
And Sappho, with her silver lyre,
And with her eyes and heart of fire,
Did she rejoice to see thee come?

¹ At Aix-la-Chapelle.

XXVIII.

And what said Wordsworth, Keats, and Poe?—
And how looked *he* from Avon's bank,
Who died and never knew his rank,—
Which surely he at last must know?

XXIX.

Strange that he never dreamed or guessed
That he was greatest of the great!—
The mortal favoured most of Fate!—
The poet who is loved the best!

XXX.

A book of his lay in thy hand,
That night, when on thy dying bed,
The moon made haloes round thy head—
To crown thee for the Shadowy Land!

XXXI.

It was the tale of Imogen!
I conned it in my callow youth!
It seemed no fable, but the truth!
—But *she* was called 'Fidelé' then.

XXXII.

—I call her 'Fair Fidelé' still!
—So tell me (for I loved her much),
Is there on earth another such?
And may I find her if I will?

XXXIII.

And Cinderella, . . . where is *she*?
And Puck and Ariel, . . . where are they?
And he who drove the Elves away—
King Olaf—is he there with thee?

XXXIV.

Tell him that when he quit the Earth,
The Goblins all came dancing back,—
And ask him if he does not lack
(Down in the dust) their tricky mirth?

XXXV.

Is Hamlet melancholy there,
And has he wed Ophelia yet?
Has old Polonius ceased to fret?
Is fat Sir John grown thin and spare?

XXXVI.

Thou hadst a fear of blindness here¹:
Now there, how can thy darksome day
Be ever brightened—where no ray
Of blessed sunshine can appear?

XXXVII.

Is it a realm whose lore is learned
Through something of the self-same ken
That forms the faith of mortal men?—
What hath thy spirit there discerned?—

XXXVIII.

Shall Christ the Lord,—*'who tarried there*
(Say the Evangelists) three days,'—
Revisit that deep vale, and raise
Its people to the upper air?

XXXIX.

Tell us the knowledge that is hid!
Tell us the thoughts a dead man thinks!
Tell us the secret of the Sphinx—
The purpose of the Pyramid!

XL.

Tell us how every seed of wheat
Can in its tiny self contain
All the whole body, bone, and brain
Of man's terrestrial self complete!—

XLI.

And how the sparrow is so shrewd
As to foresee the moment best
For picking open, in her nest,
The shells that hide as yet her brood!—

XLII.

And how the squirrel thinks to store,—
In summer,—in his hollow-tree,—
The wealth wherewith his house and he
Shall laugh as winter groweth hoar!

XLIII.

Oh tell us how the drop of dew
Is guided to each blade of grass,—
And yet how man himself, alas,
Is left to wretchedness and rue!

¹ The late Laureate (having been all his life so near-sighted that he could read a book only by holding it close before his face) became apprehensive, in his last years, that he would be blind :—a calamity from which he happily was free.

XLIV.

Why is the world so full of wrong?
 Why does our sad, degenerate time
 So reek with blood and hate and crime?
 Oh answer with another song!

XLV.

And tell us why th' assassin smites,—
 Not tyrants, as when Caesar fell,—
 But chiefs who serve their country well,
 As champions of the people's rights¹!

XLVI.

Oh speak to us from underground
 (If still thou hast the power to speak)
 And say if God be growing weak,
 And is to be at last discrowned!

XLVII.

Why maketh He such poor defence
 Against the hellish powers of ill,
 Which evermore seem conquering still,
 Despite His high Omnipotence?

XLVIII.

Shares *He* the fate of other kings?
 And hath His kingdom had its day?
 And must His sceptre pass away
 Like other perishable things?

XLIX.

Or is it *We* who, like the mole,
 Are blind, or only partly see
 The greatness of the plan which He,—
 In wisdom,—fashions as a whole?

L.

Or if as yet thou hast not caught
 A vision of His hidden face,
 Perhaps thou dwellest in a place
 Where His high mysteries now are taught.

LI.

And so, Oh tell us, hast thou still
 Thy old delight in subtle themes,
 In dark enigmas, curious dreams,
 And all the lore of good and ill?

¹ This was written a month or two after the assassination of President Carnot, and while the monstrous crime was still a fresh and current horror throughout the whole world.

LII.

And is it true that bier and pall
Must teach us to our bitter cost—
*'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all'?*

LIII.

And tell us also one thing more—
'Doth sorrow make a mortal wise?'
If so, then, O ye Heavens, chastise
This heart of mine till it be sore!

LIV.

And say if in the Shadowy Land,
O laureate, now a wandering ghost,
Thou pinest for the isle and coast
Where fell thy harp from out thy hand?

LV.

If Charon, with his muffled oar,
Should offer thee a ferriage back,
Would thy old annual Butt of Sack
Now tempt thee to thy native shore?

LVI.

And dost thou know how keen and sharp
Are now the clamours round thy name,
And how the land is crying, *'Shame!*
Let not another have his harp'?

LVII.

Thy empty place is hard to fill!
Thy harp is lying where it fell!
There let it lie! The fallen shell
Is living, and is laureate still!

PARIS, October 8, 1894.



A CAREER UNIQUE.

THE celebrated American Orator, Frederick Douglass, died in Washington. D. C., February 20, 1895, aged seventy-eight years.

He was born a slave in Maryland, 1817.

He escaped to Massachusetts, 1838.

He founded an anti-slavery newspaper, Rochester, N. Y., 1847.

He addressed anti-slavery meetings in the Northern States, and in Great Britain, with powerful eloquence, for twenty-five years.

He raised for President Lincoln two regiments of negro troops (the Massachusetts 54th and 55th), 1863.

He was appointed by President Grant to the San Domingo Commission, 1871.

He was chosen Presidential Elector-at-large for the State of New York, 1872.

He was made Marshal of the District of Columbia by President Hayes, 1881.

He was Recorder of Deeds, for the city of Washington, under Presidents Garfield and Arthur.

He was sent by President Harrison to Hayti as United States Minister, 1889.

He died in Washington (as above mentioned), and was buried at his old home, Rochester, N.Y., in Mount Hope Cemetery, with unusual public honours.

The following sonnets to his memory were written in Paris, France, immediately after his funeral.

I.

I KNEW the noblest giants of my day,
And *he* was *of* them—strong amid the strong:
But gentle too: for though he suffered wrong,
Yet the wrong-doer never heard him say
'Thee also do I hate!' . . .

A lover's lay—
No dirge—no doleful requiem-song—
Is what I owe him; for I loved him long;
As dearly as a younger brother may.

Proud is the happy grief with which I sing;
For, O my Country! in the paths of men
There never walked a grander man than he!
He was a peer of princes—yea, a king!
Crowned in the shambles and the prison-pen!
The noblest Slave that ever God set free!

II.

Too many a man is honoured overmuch!
The worthiest souls are ever scarce and few!
And ere we crown them (if at last we do)
They first are outcasts whom we shrink to touch!

From squalid Bethlehem came one of such,
 Born in a manger, and, to human view,
 A beggar—yet whom kings did homage to,
 While cattle stood in stalls about His hutch!

How does it happen that, in every clime,
 When any groaning nation of the earth
 Hath need of some new leader of a race,
 Or some true prophet of a better time,
 The Heavens elect him for his lowly birth,
 Ere they uplift him to his lofty place?

III.

I answer: He must first be taught to know—
 (I say to *know*, and not to *guess*)—how real
 Is all the misery which he hopes to heal!
 The high may show a kindness to the low:
 Some wealthy lord is generous—be it so:
 Yet *who* except the poor and pinched can feel
 Their pang of poverty? . . .

So for their weal,
 They need a champion who has borne their woe!

As the Arabian pearl, beneath the brine,
 Lies hid, and frets and chafes within its shell,
 Till by its torment it grows bright and pure,—
 So an illustrious spirit, born to shine,
 Must first in some dim depth of sorrow dwell,
 And have a wholesome anguish to endure!

IV.

Be glad, O heart of mine! and dance and leap
 At all these funeral honours paid thy friend!
 This lengthened pageantry, so slow to end!
 These crape-hung flags! these many eyes that weep!
 These cannon, loud enough to wake his sleep!
 These bells that with the trumpets interblend!
 These published praises, eloquently penned!
 All telling of an homage wide and deep.

Not since our Land of Liberty was young,
 When fiery Otis passed away in flame¹,
 And Patrick Henry's burning lips grew cold,
 Hath mortal silence hushed a braver tongue
 Than of this Bondman, who, in Freedom's name,
 Spake (like the Byzantine) with 'mouth of gold'².

¹ It will be remembered that James Otis was killed by lightning.

² Chrysostom.

v.

I ask myself, Was it a dreadful dream?—
 A wild, disordered vision of the night?—
 That the fair Country of my dear delight,
 The patriot's paradise, the exile's theme,
 The Land of Lands, where Freedom reigns supreme,
 Should once have dared, in God's offended sight,
 To sin so great a sin against the light
 That, to atone for it, a living stream
 Of human blood flowed as a holocaust,
 Till every household had a soldier slain?

—O tardy Nation, slow agen to learn!
 Let not thy former lesson now be lost!
 For now thy *Northern* millions toil in vain!
 Beware! Deny them not the bread they earn!

vi.

Shall there be Hunger in a Land of Corn?
 Then if—(shut out from idle mill and mine)—
 Come the bold beggars forth in battle-line,
 Armed and in fury, answering scorn with scorn—
 Oh *who* shall lead them in their Hope Forlorn?
 How shall they know him? How shall they divine
 Their true deliverer? I will tell the sign!
 Let him be like the man whom now we mourn!—
 A hero high above revenge or greed,
 Forbidding bloodshed and restraining hate,
 Chiding and shaming every threat of crime—
 Not rash, but patient, knowing well indeed
 That Justice, being blind, must therefore wait
 And cannot come except as led by Time!

vii.

I shout for joy—here on this foreign coast,
 Far distant from this sad, obsequious scene—
 To know that now, in everlasting green,
 His name shall be his Country's future boast!
 For now the vipers who once hissed him most,
 And stung him with their venom, vile and mean,
 (Worse than the lash!—although the lash was keen)
 All praise him! . . .

Heed them not, O gentle ghost!
 For Spartacus awaits thee, I am sure,
 To bid thee welcome! So, I ween, doth *he*—
 That mighty spirit of the Spanish Main,
 Hero and martyr, Toussaint L'Ouverture!—
 Yet greater glory is reserved for *thee*!
 For lo! thy laurels have no bloody stain!

VIII.

A friendship is a hallowed thing! . . . To-day,
 In looking back on this of his and mine
 (Which bears a date as old as 'Auld Lang Syne'—
 Ere yet a hair of either head was gray)—
A life-long love!—what tribute shall I pay
 To such a comrade? Others may entwine
 Their ivy-wreaths and lay them on his shrine,—
 But *I* am thrice a thousand miles away.
 I hope he missed me from the mournful march—
 For *I*, of all his lovers, loved him best :
 And love is jealous ; and I envy those
 Who bore him through his last triumphal arch,
 And up the frosty hillside to his rest,
 With all the North to wrap him in its snows !

IX.

I knew him to the core : so it is *I*,—
 And not the many who belaud his name,
 Not knowing him save only by his fame,—
 Yes, it is *mine* to speak and testify
 What well I know : how sacred, pure and high
 Was the sublime and solitary aim
 Which, like the Pillar of the Cloud and Flame,
 He chose (like Israel) to be guided by !
 Chief of his tribe, he centred in his soul—
 As their evangel—all their hopes and fears !
 —Through all his lifetime, as their wisest head,
 He planned to lead them to some happy goal !
 (How they will lack him in the coming years,
 And wish him back among them, from the dead !)

X.

I knew his latch-string—it hung always out !
 I knew his books, on which he loved to pore :
 His Bible—(*no* man ever read it more¹)—
 His Izaak Walton on Religious Doubt
 (And how to settle it by catching trout !)—
 His Shakespeare (with a bust above the door²)—
 His Talmud—and the never-tiring lore
 Which takes a Thousand Nights to tell about.

¹ Speaking of his slave-life in Baltimore, he says in his Autobiography, 'I have gathered scattered pages of the Bible from the filthy street-gutters, and have washed and dried them, that in moments of leisure I might get a word or two of wisdom from them.'

² This house was in Rochester, N. Y., and was burned in 1872—with all the books and busts.

And much he loved to con the Concord Sage,
And Hawthorne's Hester, and the Quaker Bard,
And Uncle Tom (the 'Cabin' and the 'Key')—
And sometimes he would even read a page
From this poor pen of mine—not for regard
Of my dull verses, but for love of *me*!

XI.

A wistful loneliness was in his look;
For thus he ever bore upon his face
(As in his heart) the sorrows of his race:
And yet he gaily—in the walks we took—
Would stop and chatter to a chattering brook,
And mimic all the creatures of the place,
And buzz in sharps, and croak in double bass,
And caw in semi-quavers like the rook!
Not one of Nature's voices (he declared)—
Whether of beast, or bird, or wind, or wave,—
Had ever chid him for his sable hue!
His fellow-men—and these alone—had dared,
With cruel taunt, to say to him, 'Thou Slave!'
(And were the only brutes he ever knew!)

XII.

He oft would bask, through all a winter's eve,
Before his yule-log, till the fire was low;
And in his talk, with all his mind aglow,
What wit and wisdom he would interweave!
It was a hearthstone I was loth to leave!
—Alack! I thither nevermore shall go!
—So, though my song is not a wail of woe,
Yet such a thought is sombre—and I grieve.
Keen was his satire; but the flashing blade,
Instead of poison on the biting steel,
Bore on its edge a balsam of a kind
Whereby the very wound the weapon made
Was at the very moment sure to heal,
And nevermore to leave a scar behind.

XIII.

If love of music be a mortal sin
(As certain of the saints are wont to say),
He was a sinner to his dying day!
For like the rest of his melodious kin
A song was what his soul delighted in,—
Especially some soft and plaintive lay
Which in the old and weird plantation way
He loved to echo on his violin.

He touched the strings with more than rustic art;
 For oft a sudden supernatural power
 Would swell within him—till he gave a vent
 To all the pent-up passion of his heart!—
 So his Cremona in a troubled hour
 Beguiled for him a care to a content¹.

XIV.

He came to Paris; and we paced the streets
 As if we twain were truants out of school!
 We clomb aloft where many a carven ghoul
 And grinning gargoyle mocked our giddy feats;
 We made a sport of sitting in the seats
 Where Kings of France were wont to sit and rule!
 'A throne,' quoth he, 'is a pretender's stool—
 For kingship is a fraud, and kings are cheats!'

He loved a hero. Nor can I forget
 How with uncovered head, in awe profound,
 He hailed Coligny's all-too-tardy stone²;
 And how, before the tomb of Lafayette*,
 He said, 'This place is *doubly* sacred ground--
 This patriot had *two* countries for his own!'

XV.

I here might crowd this empty rhyme of mine
 With tales of how my travel-eager friend
 (Who wished to see the world from end to end)
 Sped southward from the many-castled Rhine
 To languid Italy—a land supine,
 Yet soon to rouse herself (as signs portend),
 Though why she waits is hard to comprehend:
 Thence to the country of the Muses Nine—
 To Marathon, and to the Academe:
 Thence to the Sphinx at Ghizeh—whom with awe
 He answered—and his answer may be guessed:
 For there—in Egypt—by her classic stream,
 He said that every famous land he saw
 Taught him the more to love his own the best!

¹ 'Of all the interesting objects in the Museum of Genoa,' he wrote, 'the one that touched me most was the violin of Paganini—a precious object in my eyes.'

² Admiral de Coligny was murdered in the St. Bartholomew massacre, on the night of August 24, 1572.

³ Lafayette lies in the Picpus Cemetery, rue Picpus, Paris.

XVI.

For though his own had been a cruel land,
 Wherein, through many a long and groaning year,
 Oppression had been bitter and austere
 (As harsh as under Pharaoh's iron hand)—
 Yet such a slave could never be unmanned;
 But ever with a sweet and secret cheer
 He felt the day of freedom to be near.
 So when it came, he well could understand
 That his dear Country (long herself a thrall,
 Self-chained and self-degraded in the past—
 Yet smiting off her shackles with her sword
 She too!—she too!—the chiefest slave of all—
 Self-freed and self-uplifted, had at last
 Stood forth redeemed, and lovely, and adored!

XVII.

His form was like Apollo's, and his brow
 Like what the sculptors carve for Zeus's own—
 As godlike as was ever cut in stone!
 For if the old god Thor were living now,
 With his dark visage, with his frosty pow,
 And with his awe-inspiring thunder-tone,—
 Such a resembling pair (could both be known)
 Would pass for twin-born brothers, I avow!
 The gods are dead,—and all the godlike men
 Are dying too! How fast they disappear!
 For Death seems discontent to fill the grave
 With common bones, but downward to his den
 Drags, like a greedy monster, year by year
 The men most missed—the good, the wise, the brave!

XVIII.

Spake I of goodly giants in the land?
 And did I boast that I had known them well?
 I was a stripling: so I live to tell,
 In these degenerate days, how great and grand,
 How plain and simple, were the noble band
 Who cried to Heaven against that crime of Hell
 Which to the auction-block brought Babes to sell,
 And which on Women burnt a market-brand!
 Who were those heroes? Since the roll is known
 I need not call it: Lincoln was the chief:
 The rest were legion—name them whoso can:
 But whoso counts the list of Freedom's Own
 Must name the Chattel whom, with pride and grief,
 We buried yesterday and called a Man!

XIX.

What final wreath of olive, oak or bay
 (Which to withhold would do the dead a wrong)
 Is due him for the fetter, yoke and thong
 Which, as a Slave, he bore for many a day?

If to his wintry burial, blooming May
 Had come herself, chief-mourner of the throng,
 And stopped his bier as it was borne along,
 And laid a million lilies on his clay,—

Not one of all these fading funeral-flowers
 Would have survived the frost! . . . So—(since, alas!
 Such honours fade)—my Country, hark to *me*!
 Let us, in yonder Capitol of ours,
 Mould him a statue of enduring brass
 Out of the broken chains of slaves set free!

PARIS, Feb. 28, 1895.

A QUERY FOR QUIDNUNCES:

Is the Earth a Real World, or is it only a Phantasm?

THE scene of the following poem is in the western part of Syria—among the Lebanon Mountains.

It is the country between Sidon and Damascus, and is known alike for its silk-factories and for its monasteries.

The inhabitants—numbering a third of a million souls—are a mixed population of Christians and Mohammedans—or (more definitely stated) of Maronites and Druzes—with a sprinkling of certain Arabian tribes of minor consequence, whose names are locally notorious yet are not familiar to the world at large.

The characteristic products of the soil are mulberries and olives—together also with a few remaining celebrated trees—the ‘Cedars of Lebanon’; a forest older than the Old Testament: for these time-defying trees are therein chronicled as having yielded the material for the wood-work of the Temple at Jerusalem—built by King Solomon, B.C. 1013.

The joint Powers of Europe signed a convention, September 6, A.D. 1864, putting the two ranges of the Lebanon Mountains, with all their adjoining valleys and plains, and with all their motley population of Maronites, Druzes, Arabs and others, under the political protectorate of the Sultan of Turkey.

The time of the poem is the Midsummer of 1869.

I.

THE Monk of Adra, dwelling on Mount Dyr¹,
 Could see—at certain seasons of the year—
 With just his naked eye—
 The moons of Jupiter, as they appear
 In the Sidonian sky.

¹ Pronounced as if written Deer or Dear.

Quoth he, one eve, 'The sky is clear,
 The mountain-path is safe and dry,
 The hour is nearly eight,
 So Abdul-Hammel must be drawing nigh :
 He ought to be already here :
 Be patient, Brethren, let the supper wait !'

II.

Meanwhile, not yet in view,
 Though on the mountain-top, and heading straight
 For the Carthusian monastery-gate,—
 Upon a snow-white camel
 Rode Abdul-Hammel—
 The wisest Arab of the Kilpin tribe—
 Their one and only scholar, clerk and scribe.

The Kilpins—anciently a warlike band—
 Were now no longer rovers in the land
 But dwelt as shepherds by the Brook Daroo ;
 And having dwindled to a few,
 And being poor, with nought to do
 Except their scanty flocks to keep,
 They were as simple as their sheep.

III.

Now many a Moslem dares not condescend
 To share a Christian's bread and salt,
 But deems such fellowship to be a fault :
 Not so with Abdul-Hammel ! 'Nay,' said he,
 'I love my fellow-men, whoever they may be !—
 For heads may differ, and yet hearts agree.'

This Arab was the Monk of Adra's oldest friend :
 It was a friendship of a long, long date :
 And now, for several summers past
 (Each one of which, they thought, might be their last,
 For both their heads were hoar,
 And nigh upon fourscore),
 The twain—whose earthly sundering must be soon—
 Agreed to meet meanwhile at each new moon,
 To spend an evening in debate.

IV.

This monthly confab—which was first a freak,
 And then a habit—grew to be renowned :
 It dug down deeply into Hebrew roots,
 And into Saracenic sacred scrolls,
 And into palimpsests of faded Greek,
 And into Ptolemy's papyrus-rolls,—
 And into other schemes for saving souls.

V.

Sometimes the younger brethren—patient—meek—
 Would sit awhile to hear the dotards speak,
 But soon would steal away—
 Too tired to stay.

VI.

Then, doubly, trebly shawled and gowned,
 And muffled thick against the cooling air
 (For on that windy hill
 The summer nights grew chill),
 The old pedantic pair—
 Thus *tête-à-tête*—
 Each as the other's intellectual mate—
 Would sit till midnight; and with jest and jibe
 Would hold their charitable, sweet disputes
 On old Phœnician subtilties profound,
 Such as Free Will and Fate;
 Or else their wheezy laughter would resound
 If either of the sages
 Chanced to propound
 Some antique riddle of the classic ages;—

 But as to knowledge of a newer date,
 They felt for it a hot, contemptuous hate,
 And flung their joint defiance
 At every modern science!—
 While many a merry squib they hurled
 At all this much too modern world!

VII.

No topic pleased them more than to contend
 Concerning Dreams and Visions—a contested ground
 Whereon they now had chased each other round and round,
 With argument, rejoinder and reply,
 Month after month, from April to July!

VIII.

For never two such garrulous old men
 Were known before, nor will be known agen!

IX.

So if indeed
 This lyric screed
 Is to be rhymed aright,—
 O Muse, let this thy Lay
 Be piped upon thy windiest reed!—
 And thou wilt need

Full many a long-drawn breath to fill thy lungs!—

For how wilt thou recite—

In ever-changing mood—from grave to gay—
The colloquy of two such babbling tongues,

Except, O Sprite,

Thou be thyself as babblesome as they?

x.

Meanwhile, O tuneful Fairy,

The supper waits untasted!

Now, if the truth be told,
Carthusian monks, though humble,

Have this vagary:

They fret and grumble—

They scold—

(And swear!)—

If after song or prayer

They find their porridge cold!

And so, O Muse, restrain their holy wrath,

And now, lest further time be wasted,

At once declare

By what a tortuous and ascending path

(Up which no camel could, or would, have hasted)

The Kilpin climbed—who, by his kindly code,

Exempted every beast that bore a load

From whip or goad.

xI.

Up from the sheep-farms at the river's bend

(Where all the Kilpin flocks at night are penned);

Up through the vineyards of El Zeit;

Up where the jealous Druze

And where the envious Maronite—

(One to the left—the other to the right)—

Hold lands contiguous—yet, O shameful sight!

Hold fiercely opposite religious views,

And being pious neighbours, therefore fight!—

(A style of manners that must mend,

Or both their tribes are doomed!)—

Up, till at dusk, the mountain-height

Was by a million glow-worms now illumed,

Making the roadway bright,—

The camel-rider—riding at a rate

So slow that he was likely to be late—

Reached leisurely at last his journey's end.

XII.

Just as he halted at the convent-door,
 And ere he from his camel could alight,
 A big bell boomed !—
 With all its might !—
 A very tocsin in its stroke and roar !—
 Announcing supper !—which had been delayed
 An hour or more
 (The camel being such a loitering jade !)

XIII.

Then forth—bareheaded—flushed with joy,
 And happy as a boy !—
 The Monk of Adra on his crutches came,
 With eager stride (forgetting he was lame !)—
 And in his hand he bore—
 In Friendship's name—
 A wicker basket from the waiting feast ;
 And to the rider (still astride the beast)
 He held the basket up ; and standing thus—
 Crutch-propped—th' impetuous Priest pell-mell,
 A fervid orator !—at once resumed—
 With learnèd lore—
 The controversy of the month before !

XIV.

Quoth he, 'The point which I will now discuss,
 Though wholly new
 (That is, though later than the Codex), yet is true :

But first, my Pagan friend, you wrongly hold
 A tenet foolish and inane,
 Which therefore I—
 With lesser learning, yet as a Carthusian—
 Forthwith deny :

This goodly Earth—(as *you* maintain)—
 Is not a globe, with hill and plain,—
 With forests growing,
 And rivers flowing,
 And tempests blowing,
 And cattle lowing,—
 But is a freak of fancy !—an illusion !—
 A coinage of the brain !

 This World of Ours, you say,
 Is but a spectacle !—an outward seeming !—

And Men—in all their manifest pursuits—
 In all their ploughing and their sowing—
 In all their coming and their going—
 In all their toiling and their scheming—
 Are all and always doing nought but dreaming!—
 Dreaming in open day!

Now, O my tardy guest,
 Of all the lazy brutes
 On all our mountain-crest,
 Your camel is the laziest!—and (it would appear)
 He grows the lazier every year!—
 Till for his jog, jog, jogging
 He ought to have a flog, flog, flogging!—
 Yet since he finally has brought you here,
 Dismount, and let the laggard rest:
 I wish to put your doctrine to a test:

Look at these tempting fruits!

Now Heaven be praised,
 These figs, which our Carthusians here have raised,
 Are real and honest figs: they *are* what they *appear*:
 Not mental images!—not cerebrations!—
 Not shadows, films nor apparitions!—
 Not a big basketful of mere cognitions!—
 But genuine figs, I claim,
 Instead of false pretences of the same!
 You need refreshment—taste them—they are fine!

Nor will you sin
 If you come in
 And also taste our monastery wine!

For, oh such creature-comforts—so delicious—
 So actual—
 So factual—
 Should make not even *you* suspicious
 That they will prove supposititious!

And though an Arab (if he can)
 Should keep the Fast of Ramadan,
 Yet *you*, my Kilpin, who to-day have ridden—
 With sore fatigue—
 For thrice a league—
 Through flies and fleas—through heat and dust—
 May take a Christian's word on trust
 That figs and wine are not hallucinations,
 But are indubitable consolations!'

XV.

Then Abdul-Hammel gravely bowed,
And thus replied :
‘ Figs by the Prophet are allowed—
Wine by the Prophet is forbidden :
And so, my Christian brother,
I join you in the one, not in the other.’

XVI.

‘ Do as you will,’ the Monk of Adra said
(Who led his guest to where the monks were messing),
‘ You are an obstinate yet honest soul,
So though you may abjure the flowing bowl
(And thus forgo a very Christian blessing !)
Yet since philosophers are good at guessing,
Tell me how long, how very very long
A headstrong heathen will continue wrong ?
For, as to Dreams and Visions, O my friend,
When is our wordy warfare like to end ?’

XVII.

The Arab answered, ‘ Sir, not soon, I hope,
For it is plain
That neither Caliph, Pope,
Sanhedrim, Holy Czar,
Nor Lama, no, nor Avatar,
Will intervene
Between us twain,
To judge and to decide :
So when we meet—
Each deeming his opinion to be true—
We each begin the same old strife anew :
Yet not, I trust, in vain :
For I this afternoon have done my ride—
Through all the heat !—
(And oh the sun was hot,
Without a drop of rain !)—
On purpose to come here, my Christian sir,
To sit me down—(as at your very feet !)—
To learn from you wherein I err !
If you can tell me,—do !
—If verily you love me, spare me not !
Take up your cudgel—do your best (or worst !)
Begin !—speak first !’

XVIII.

‘ Speak first yourself,’ the merry monk replied,
‘ Your courteous humbleness is Arab pride !
The brethren all have slunk away !’

We are alone !
 Speak ! Testify ! Depone !
 Tell me the reason of your mad persistence
 In a delusion so unsound
 As that this Globe of Ours has no existence,
 But rolls around
 In a magnific orbit which is all confined
 Within the limits of a skull or brain or mind ?

Look from this mountain-height
 And scan the Heavens to-night !
 How near they seem !—Orion's self not far !

And yet you bid me think of moon and star,
 Of wet and dry,
 Of good and ill,
 Of weal and woe,
 As things that never *were*, nor *are*,
 Save that the minds of men, in times gone by,
 Have always thought them so,
 And that the mass of mortals think so still,
 And always will !

Your stubbornness is strong !

The darkness of an error must be dense
 When whoso holds the error is so blind
 As not to see that he himself is wrong
 When he is counter to the common sense
 Of all mankind
 For ages long !

Now when you say the World—(which God hath wrought)—
 Is non-existent save in human thought,
 You thereby contravene
 God's own original creative plans :
 You make this Great Terrene
 Not God's own handiwork but merely Man's.

And yet, my Kilpin Heretic, heigho !
 The flying comets come and go,
 Whether we mortals think of them or no !

You are a Moslem, be it so !
 You love the Crescent—which we Monks profane :
 It is—to *you*—an emblematic sign
 Of a religion which you deem divine :

But I digress :

I merely ask you to confess
 How yonder Crescent—which to-night is new—
 The merest thread!—just coming into view!—
 Was taught—a thousand million years ago—
 By Nature's self—to wax and wane
 . . . Ere ever yet a human brain
 Had dreamed a dream—or given a guess—
 Or formed a fancy! Man was yet unborn!

So Nature—at Creation's morn—
 Sprang, as you must admit,
 From something else than Human Wit.

And so, my Heaven-defying friend,
 How can the fool called Man—a finite soul—
 Dare to pretend
 That *he* directs the planets as they roll?
 That *he* it was who flung the moons about?
 That *he*—while yet he was an unborn thing—
 Gave forth, in the primordial years,
 The fiat which awoke the Music of the Spheres?
 Is it your Kilpin creed
 That it was Man indeed
 Who taught the Morning Stars to sing?
 And is it *he*
 Who from the sea
 Brings in the tides and thither sends them out?
 And guides the whirlwind and the waterspout?

Moreover, look at yonder ancient tree
 Which flings its shadow on our convent-wall!
 It is our eldest Cedar of them all!—
 For (as our cloister-records show)
 It here hath stood
 Upon this holy hill
 In this primaeval wood
 Through thrice a thousand years of bloom,
 Unwithered still!—
 And is as old (or so our Abbot thinks)
 As Egypt's Sphinx,
 Or Jacob's Well,
 Or Abraham's Tomb,—
 And having been so long alive,
 Perhaps (for aught I know)
 It will survive
 And greenly thrive
 Till Gabriel's Crack of Doom!

Now answer me without prevarication :

Say if so ancient yet so green a thing—

(The oldest that has grown

In all our Syrian nation)—

Owes its huge trunk, not to each added ring

Which Nature gives it, every spring,

But is its bark the Human Mind's creation?

And are its antique branches framed alone

By modern meditation?

Now, O my Kilpin conferee,

Although this venerable tree

May be a vision only,—a mere arborescent,

Diliquescent,

Evanescent,

Unsubstantial, and yet long-established fraud,—

You will at least agree

That crows have cawed,

And owls tu-whitted and tu-whooed,

And singing birds their madrigals galore

Have now for thirty centuries or more,

In yonder tree-top chanted,—

As if their feathered troops

(Like foolish little dupes!)

Had always taken all the grove for granted

As being veritable trees indeed!—

Wherein to nest!—wherein to breed!—

A grove which I have heard our Abbot say

Sprang not from any seed

That Adam—or the sons of Adam—planted;

For God Himself

(Ere Man as yet was moulded out of clay)

Set up these Cedars on this rocky shelf,—

And bade them here to stay

Until the Judgement Day!

Not all your subtile intellection

Nor psychic introspection

Can show how things that *are* are *not*,—

Nor how it is our mortal lot

To be so cheated by the God who made us,

And who, in making us, has so betrayed us

That He—and We—and our Terrestrial Ball—

And Heaven itself . . . do not exist at all!

But setting God and Heaven aside

(As being hard to understand),

How is it easy to be shown

That this green Earth—whereon we fools abide—

This huge, thick globe—with all its solid land—
 Deep down to its foundation-stone—
 Is but a dream alone?

Is it a fancied world wherein we dwell?
 Are mortals born of fancied pangs of birth?
 And when their life is ending, is their death
 A merely fancied passing of their breath?

Such sophists surely do not reason well;
 Their reasoning is a thousand miles amiss!
 For, tell me this:

If it be fancy merely—nought beside—
 That when we hunger we have need of bread,
 Why not imagine then that we are fed?
 Why not imagine too that all our ailings—
 Our pains—our aches—our faintnesses and failings—
 Our ills of mind and body—all are banished?
 That every sting, that every smart
 Has been exorcized, and has vanished?

Then why should not the sick be sound instead?
 Or why should there be headache in a head,
 Or heartache in a heart?

[And here, O Kilpin, take this added shawl—
 The night is growing colder:
Which is your more rheumatic shoulder?

Or do you shiver
 From torpid liver?
 I pause a moment just to light the fire:
 These olive-roots will quickly warm the room:
 Well, to resume,
 Let me inquire,—]

Is honey sweet?
 And is there bitterness in gall?
 And is it natural for a brook to brawl,
 And for the goshawk to be fleet,
 And for the snail to crawl?
 And is it joy when ancient comrades meet?
 And is it grief to bend
 Over a life-long friend
 Who lieth in his winding-sheet,
 With lilies on his funeral pall?

If things like these be so,—
 (And certainly, without dispute,
 They claim to constitute
 Our life and world, our weal and woe!)

Then what reality do you refute
 By answering, "No, oh no!
 These are not things—not entities—not actions!
 These are mentalities and mere abstractions!"?

And mark, O Kilpin, though you may miscall
 Our earth a thing of fancy, yet you act
 As if you take it for a thing of fact:
 You shun a snake as if his sting
 Were miserably real
 And deadly poisonous therewithal!—
 And yet your snake is not a living thing,
 But just an image!—just a mere ideal!

 Perhaps our hill-top here
 May not to you appear
 A dangerous summit to ascend:
 But there be mounts thrice higher than Mount Dyr:
 What of the dizzy Alp, whose sides are sheer?
 And do the Switzers, mile by mile,
 In tugging up their Matterhorn,
 Say with a noble scorn
 And with a haughty smile,
 "Our glacier is a mere ethereal wall,
 And therefore we who climb it, cannot fall?"

 They fall,—and by their fall, they perish!

 So too, oh lackaday!
 The strange delusions which you cherish
 May cheat you till you think,
 When on the slippery brink,
 That the abyss which yawns below
 Is but a *dream* of ice and snow!
 Despise not what I say,—
 But coming, going, pick your way!

 The rocks which you regard
 As but appearances, are flinty hard,—
 And if you fall on the relentless shard,
 You will be pitilessly bruised and scarred!

 Some silly Sciolist
 Who cuts his ankle or his wrist
 Against our Sidon granite,—
 May bind his wound, and yet insist
 That though it bleeds, it is a fancied gash!
 My wiser friend, the brave are always rash!
 Take care!
 Beware!

Not all the Palimpsests of all the Past
Can relegate the summer's heat
Or winter's frost
From off this mountain (which is its domain)
And lodge it merely in the Pilgrim's brain ;
Nor yonder, if on Maré Magno's waves
The tempest raves,
Will any Sailor, when his ship is lost,

Bethink him, while his peril is extreme,
 To say, "This is no hurricane!—
 This is a dream!"

XIX.

Thus volubly the Monk contended,
 And when he ended,
 What said the Arab?—(for, O Muse, now deign
 To change thy key, and chant a counter-strain.)
 What said the Kilpin?—(he whose hair and beard,
 Unrazored and unsheared,
 Commingling into one white grace,
 Drooped like a cashmere mantle thrown
 About his shoulders, and across his breast,
 And hiding half his face :
 A sage so winter-seared
 That he was youthful only in his eyes—
 Which were of bulbous and loquacious size,
 And which (the Monk of Adra said) appeared
 Almost as wise
 As did the Devil's own !

XX.

The Arab gravely laughed,
 And grimly shook his head,
 And gruffly said,—
 ('Though he was gentle even when he jeered,—)
 'O bookworm Monk, you think the Kilpins daft
 Because their education
 Has come from water-brooks
 And shepherds' crooks,
 And not from books :
 You even take the Bedouins to be fools,
 Because they scorn your yoke of subjugation
 And will not be your catspaws and your tools !
 But tell me, Do not all your Christian schools
 Teach that the souls of men in every nation
 In all the Earth
 Have some religion which, to *them*, appears as true
 As *yours* to *you* ?
 Now these religions—which are manifold,—
 And which are polyglot—
 Have always, from the days of old,
 Had each and all alike the same foundation :
 And this is what ?
 Why this is Faith : and Faith (or so I hold)
 Is Reason ere yet Reason comes to birth :

Man in his cradle is a lump of clay—
 A limp and thoughtless clot:
 Faith is his primal logic—Reason in due course
 Comes at a later day
 In order to enforce
 A sure conviction on his doubting mind:
 Meanwhile it is by Faith that man must find
 His earliest evidence of things unseen:
 So that although the eye can see them not,
 Yet neither Jew nor Gentile need be blind
 To things invisible,
 To things immortal,
 To things pertaining to the Soul and Heaven.

Now Faith is stronger—stronger seven times seven—
 Than Reason!—which is but a later light,
 And which is often wrong, and seldom right.

Faith is our faculty of inner sight—
 The noblest of our natural powers—
 The blessed function which alone can render
 The Other World as plain to us as This of Ours.

By Faith we see the Future in advance!—
 Not dimly, but in all its splendour!—
 A splendour which we mortals, year by year,
 By further faith, still more and more enhance,—
 Until—oh destiny sublime!—
 As Death draws near,
 We to whom Earth and Time
 Have seemed so powerfully real and clear
 May hope to find a like reality
 (Albeit clearer far!)
 When—in the brighter clime
 Of some more blazing star—
 We reach our Paradise and Immortality!

Faith therefore is the key—the only key—
 That opes the Other World to you and me!

In this, our two religions both agree!

Now you who hold my dreaming in derision
 Will further still deride,
 And answer in a huff,
 And cry "What stuff!"
 And call me mad,—
 For now I add:
Both Worlds are One!—

You have a Codex—a most sacred scroll :
 It tells you of a Country of the Soul :
 It teaches you what name to call it by :
 You call it Heaven !—
 The Seventh of Seven !

And why ?

Because it is the highest of the high !—
 Out-zenithing the utmost upper sky !—
 Out-goldening the sun's intensest beam !—
 A realm without a sorrow or a sigh !—
 In beauty, perfect !—and in bliss, supreme !
 Now therefore it would seem

That such a Country can be nothing but a Dream !

And though, O jocund Jesuit, you have said,
 Wagging your tonsured head,
 "A dream is but a dream—so what a pity
 That there be dreamers down in Kilpin Vale
 Who take the Golden City
 To be a fairy-tale !"

Yet I reply :

A dream may be a dream, and yet be more !
 For though our common dreams, no doubt,
 Are fabricated in the dreamer's head ;
 Yet dreams when they are grandest, sweetest,

And completest,

Are fashioned not *within* the sleeper's mind
 But steal upon his fancy from *without* !
 They come uncalled and glorify his bed !

For let me here remark,

A dream is fond of travelling in the dark :

It loves the gloom :

It fears the light,

But in the night

It glides as boldly as a ghost let out

From bondage in a tomb !

A vision thus goes wandering round about
 In search of some sick beggar in his garret-room,
 Or of some hag death-stricken in her hut,—

Till, though the eyes of both be shut,

Yet shall those squalid sleepers each behold
 Those very Gates of Pearl, those very Streets of Gold,
 Whereof the fivescore-wintered Patmian told¹ !

¹ When St. John in Patmos received the Revelation of the New Jerusalem he was a hundred years old.

If dreams of lesser import come,
 Consider them aright;
 For if they tickle you with mirth,
 Or else with terror strike you dumb,
 Throw such a dream away!—
 It is a mere remembrance of the day:
 It is but earthy—earthier than the earth!

But if a vision of translucent ray
 Should come (as come it might)
 Revealing some unworldly wonder to your sight,
 Think it no mockery!—do it no despite!—
 For, oh my friend,
 It may from Heaven's own very self descend!

Though differing much, we yet are in accord
 In holding that the hallowed spot is known
 Where Jacob, foot-sore and alone,
 Lay down at nightfall on our Haran sward¹
 And slept upon a pillow of a stone—
 While to his slumbering eyes
 Came Angels on a Ladder from the skies!

Now when he woke at dawn
 And found the Ladder gone,
 Did Jacob say, "It was a weary man's conceit"?

He said, "It was a vision from the Lord!"

Did Peter—when he saw the Great Four-cornered Sheet—
 Call it a cheat?

Nay, nay,
 He did not disobey,
 But rose, and forth from Joppa went
 As he was sent.

Did Pharaoh, after dreaming of the Kine,
 Say, "Be they fat or lean,
 A dream is but a dream, and therefore nought"?

Not so, O Christian friend of mine,
 The heathen King most wisely sought
 To know of Joseph what it all might mean,
 And willingly was taught.

¹ Gen. xxviii. 10.

Now when my camel slumbers, I can tell
If he be dreaming of the wayside well,—
 For as he sips,
 He smacks his lips:
My weary ass, when he is drowsing,
Imagines meadows of delight
 Where he is browsing,—
And then his appetite is keenest,
For in his dreams his grass is greenest:
My horse—my dog—at dead of night
Will wake with sudden joy or fright
From having seen some supernatural sight.

Believe me, O Carthusian, mortals find
That dreams may come to man quite otherwise
Than as the mere inventions of his mind;
They come upon us from the world around us;
We are the objects of their nightly quest:
They seek us all night long till they have found us;
Sometimes they miss us, and their quest is vain,—
 And then our night is free;
 But oftener, it may be
That, losing not their course by land or sea,
 They bring their motley train
 Straight to where sleep hath bound us,—
 And then, to our surprise,
Although they seldom rouse us from our rest,
 Yet without stirring we arise
And ope the Ivory Gate and let them in.

And well it were for you and me
To keep the Ivory Gate ajar,—
For there be dreams that have to come from far, —
 Which cannot reach the gate
 Until the night be late.

I say they travel both by sea and land:
So come they will, for they are on their way!
They will arrive before the break of day!

Perhaps these visitors will be a band
Of bellicose invaders who will storm us,
 And who, in spite of bolt and bar,
Will enter, and will daze us with their din!
 Or haply, on the other hand,
They may be gentle pilgrims, to inform us
In what delightful countries they have been,
And whence their errands to our pillows are!

So I make bold to say
 That when our sleep
 Is sound and deep
 The brightest and most vivid of our dreams
 (Those giving us our glimpses and our gleams
 Of things most wonderful in Wonder-Land)
 Are of a fabric not entirely planned
 By any process which we understand;

Their figures oft are cunningly combined
 In curious shapes and patterns—not designed
 Within our slumbering brain alone;
 They have a being of their own—
 A nature not akin to ours;
 For they have foreign elements and ultra powers—
 Strange energies of a Supernal kind,
 Remote from any motion of our mind:
 They cast their spells, and work their weird effects
 As Puck, or Ariel, or some other sprite directs.

If not, then answer me, I pray,
 How visions of the night can quit our sleep
 (For so they may)
 And come to us elsewhere—
 Even at mid-day, in the sun-illumined air?
 Visions so visible, and so enticing fair,
 That they have potency to grapple with a man,
 To wreak their will upon him, and to act
 As if their airiness were all compact
 Of living, ruling, mischief-making forces
 Which misdirect him in his worldly courses,—
 Divinely guiding him in sleep by night,
 And then in open day
 Alluring him astray!

What follow we but dreams indeed?
 Though, knowing them for dreams, why do we give them
 heed?
 We give them heed, for though they be but dreams,
 Yet each is something other than it seems;
 Is it *within* us? yea!
 And yet it is *beyond* us too!
 Is it an inward vision, charm or spell?
 It is an outer, living thing as well!

And hence, it is an evil genius, or a good:
 A blessing, or a bane:

But whether it be false or true,
And whether it be well or ill,
We cannot shake it from us if we would,
For still,
However much against our will,
In spite of all that we can do,
Its power upon us will remain!

So as a Kilpin dreamer I contend
That you, my much too theologic friend,
Unwittingly defraud your Christian mind
In every instance where you fail to see—
By act of faith—what Kilpins can discern
Most clearly, clearly!
For you have yet to learn
That visions sent from Heaven are not confined
To Bethlehem's shepherds merely!

Your Christian logic therefore I impugn:
You hold it to your hurt,—
And so I re-assert
What I expounded at the last new moon:
That is, A dream perchance is Heaven's own boon!
It may be sent
With the intent
To prophesy to you some great event!
The Spirits of the Air,
More plainly than you guess, or are aware,
Have often spoken
To mortal men in heavy sleep at night!
Be wise! Interpret all such messages aright!
Your dream may be a true celestial token
To show you that the Arch-Angelic Powers
Are Guardian Angels of your sleeping hours!

Such dreams and visions—one and all—
Come with a purpose—come when they are needed—
And come, O Sir, in hope of being heeded.

You are a Christian—heed them as St. Paul
Heeded that holy light
Which near Damascus smote his dazzled sight
And made him three days blind—
It was so heavenly bright!

And, oh thou mocking monk, I say
That were all Syria mine to fling away
I willingly would throw it like a stone
Into yon moonlit sea,

[Why this is Moka coffee!—as I live!
How can you mendicants afford to give
So good a Moka to so poor a guest?
How hot and fragrant!—Moka of the best!
Now this is jugglery,
Or else is smuggling!

This berry has not paid the Caliph's tax!
 How dare you, on your Christian mountain-top,
 Thus cheat the Caliph of his revenue?
 This is a scandal which the Pope should stop!
 It proves the Arab maxim true, how true!—
 That as to morals, Monks are lax, how lax!]

Now (to revert to what I just was saying
 Before the coffee came) I say agen:
 The Devil has been newly loosed of late—
 To range with freedom both in Church and State:

What is your Monkish duty then?
 A proper piety, O my Carthusian,
 Should bid you stop your braying
 Against my Kilpin doctrine of illusion
 (A doctrine which is beautifully right)—
 And then your Abbot—you—and all your Order—
 A comely train, forsooth!—
 And like a Mecca caravan!—
 Should start as pilgrims seeking for the truth,
 And quit your mountain—cross my valley-border—
 And there with me unite
 To make a common fight
 Against the common Enemy of Man!

I have a battle-plan
 Which cannot fail
 To conquer him in Kilpin Vale!
 Adopt my scheme!—
Dissolve the Devil into just a Dream!—

And then (to end our long dispute)
 Likewise transmute
 Into another dream 'so like the same
 That both shall be as one)
 This God-created Universe
 That groans beneath the Devil's curse,—
 And let the Devil's reign be done!

This will be better
 Than binding him for just a thousand years
 With chain and fetter—
 Which you can never do according to the letter:
 So burn your Codex—for the letter killeth!
 The will of Man should be what Allah willeth!
 You call this Earth of yours a Vale of Tears!
 You sigh and say, "It is a World of Woe!"
 And you declare, from what you see and know,

That War and Want and Wretchedness and Crime
Are rampant now in every land and clime!

And do you say the Wicked are to blame?

I answer, no!

The Pious have the greater guilt and shame!—

See how religious creeds

Engender bloody deeds!

Do we not know in Syria, to our sorrow,

That peace to-day means always war to-morrow?

Think you that God in Heaven respects

This warfare of religious sects?

What is the worth

Of such an Earth?

Lift up your sleeve and hide agen your face!

Now such a Globe, say I, is a disgrace!

It brings discredit on the Human Race!

So bad a World, my friend,

I know a way to end!—

Melt it away! Let it no more exist!

Dispel it as the Sun dispels a mist!

This plan of mine

Is most benign,—

Nor need you fear

That it will cause our Earth to disappear!

We shall not part with our Terrestrial Sphere,—

For, just to dream of it, will keep it here!

Our old familiar Globe which we have known

Shall still be ours—yea, more and more our own,

And ever growing greener, richer still!—

A fairer Earth which, if we only will,

We may go on to fill

With other, better dreams—of good, and not of ill—

Dreams that shall be so full of holy cheer

That just our dreams alone shall bring the Golden Year!

A world, though built of dreams, is still a world!—

All fresh!—all morning-like!—all dew-empared!—

And is more real by far

Than rocks and mountains are!

Things solid soon or late

Must yield to fate:

They crack—they fall—they rot away!

Their chief reality is their decay!

But things intangible—we may be sure—

These and these only—evermore endure!

WILLIAM MORRIS,

ARTIST, POET, AND PHILANTHROPIST.

(1834-1896.)

AND was he wrong? If so, then who is right?
 He was a sower of those mystic seeds
 Which, in its backward Spring, his country needs—
 To make its future Harvest golden-bright!
 The crop he sowed—(and may it know no blight!)—
 Was not of Wars—from which his nation bleeds—
 But Justice, Truth, and Charitable Deeds!
 His lofty garden was the mountain-height
 Where only growths celestial can be grown!
 Nought else can flourish in that upper air!
 He had a fellow-labourer—one alone:
 And this was Freedom! Oh the noble pair!
 Henceforth, throughout the Earth, where *one* is known,
 The *other* also shall be honoured there!



PARNASSUS MODERNISSIMUS,

OR THE OLD POETS IMPROVED.

A SATIRE FOR TO-DAY,

Showing the Play of Hamlet de-dramatized, and the story re-constructed in a less harrowing form, re-written in the most recent 'Literary Lingo' current in London, and re-embellished with the most modern flummery of 'Fine Writing' now fashionable in New York.

I.

I AM a Poet for the Magazines—
 (Not for the *old* ones, but the new)—
 And this is what I do:

I take (that is, I 'steal') the leading scenes
 From early Tragedies of Death and Fate,
 Not widely read of late,
 And bring them 'up to date':

V.

So on a certain summer's day
 He plied his pickaxe, spade, and mug,—
 And thus with singing, jesting, laughing,
 And ale-quaffing,—
 He delved till he had dug
 Most faithfully for a most faithful maid
 Her final bed of everlasting sleep,—
 Yet not a bed of rest :

It was a couch which was to prove unquiet :

For you shall shortly be astounded
 To find this place of tombs a scene of riot,
 And of 'confusion worse confounded.'

VI.

It was a grave unhallowed and unblest ;—
 Wherein, unshriven, and even unconfessed,—
 The Damozel, in just her winding-sheet,
 Without a requiem, and without a prayer,
 Was laid with ceremonies incomplete ;—
 For oh ! it irks me to declare
 That Holy Church—(which hath of souls the care)—
 Had with a pious rancour frowned,
 And published to the world around
 That though the maid was young and pure and fair,
 Yet she had sought her own salvation, and was drowned :

So, such a maid must have a maledicted mound.

[Now that's a phrase
 Which you may praise ;—
 For 'maledicted mound' is good.]

VII.

Then down there leapt into the Delver's chasm,
 Wherein the shroud-veiled Virgin lay,
 A frenzied Youth, her brother,
 Who (as a brother should)
 Cried out, 'O Rose of May !'

VIII.

Whereat—straightway—
 In a still fiercer spasm—
 A second Youth, more furious than the other,
 Down leapt into that 'pit of clay.'

IX.

The twain were two!

So *who* was *who*?

The first we know already:
The second—who was twice as hot and heady—
We therefore shall deductively discover:
He was of course the fair Ophelia's lover:
He was young Hamlet, verily and certes,—
Just as the other youth was young Laertes.

X.

Then in that deep-dug narrow space
Wherein they thus stood face to face,
A mighty miracle took place!—

For there, in just a little while—
(Not *over* half a minute—even *under*)—
(That's quick, you must agree!)—
Up to a height unmeasured by a plummet
Mount Ossa was upheaved to Pelion's summit,
With 'blue Olympus' added, making three—
All in a single pile!
Oh what a sight to see!

XI.

The guilty King of Denmark gazed with wonder
And whispered with a voice of thunder,
'Pluck them asunder!'

XII.

Queen Gertrude then was heard to add,
'My son is mad!'

And mad he was, for in his spleen and bile
He bragged that he would eat a crocodile!

What stuff!

It is too dubious to repeat!
Such talk is too, too totally incredible,—
For though the crocodile is known to eat,
Yet he himself remains inedible;
He is too tough:

But Hamlet, with a hankering appetite,
(O holy Moses!)
In hope of getting crocodiles enough
Wildly proposes

To drink up all the Esil—
 Which is, the Nile!—
 This boast of course is but a 'bluff'—
 [The Nile has many where its banks are rough.]

Now hark,
 And mark!

The big John Gilbert in 'Sir Peter Teasle'
 Showed great capacity for taking snuff;
 And yet a giant thrice as huge as he
 Would not be able (as it seems to me)—
 With just one thumb—and one forefinger—of one hand—
 To pinch up all the whole Sahara's desert-sand:

For such a monstrous pinch
 Would be too great a cinch:

And hence to think that Hamlet, in his huff,
 Should so splenetically blow and puff,
 And boast of such enlargement of his liver
 As to attempt to drink the whole deep river
 That flows through Egypt's lengthy land
 Is more than I can understand.

XIII.

But let me here philosophize:
 I hold a tenet, sound and wise,—
 And it is this:
 That Man—from babyhood—when he begins to toddle—
 Develops slowly—after Nature's blundering model;—
 For Nature gives to Man an insufficient noddle!

He therefore goes amiss!
 So men are fools, or babies overgrown!
 And hence their miseries never come alone
 But in a lump,—
 Or else at least in doubles,—
 As if to duplicate their troubles!
 For instance, who has ever had a single measle,
 Or single mump?
 Or who but Hamlet?—*he* had one of each:
 A man should have them both, or none at all:
 So Hamlet lacked the necessary 'gall':
 He was not measley, neither was he mumpish—
 But merely dumpish.

XIV.

I am no Thespian's critical detractor,
 But I must speak without evasion,
 So I assert with firmness, as a fact,

That save alone on one supreme occasion,
And in one single solitary act,—
The 'melancholy Dane' was such a gump
That no one thinks of calling him an actor.

xv.

Now if you ask me, Why, oh why
This act of Hamlet was so saltatory?—
(That is to say, Why leapt he down so plump
With such a jump?)—
I will not pause for a reply!
To pause would dis-accelerate my story,—
And I desiderate to rush it through.

xvi.

The twain (as I have said) were two:—
What therefore were they both about to do?
An angry man resembles a chameleon—
He changes colour: therefore when you see
A pair of angry men of varying hue,—
You may prognosticate from such a sight
That they premeditate the sort of fight
Yclepit 'free':
(And yet but little freedom here was found,
For both the combatants were underground!)

So now take note!

The wrath of one was in its perihelion,—
And of the other in its perigee:
So the two orbits of their ire
Thus met in one desire,—
Which was, to grip each other by the throat!
How strange that men should thus behave
In what should be the peaceful grave!

xvii.

You will observe, I ween,
That in this famous scene
Of Hamlet and Laertes in the 'pit,'
I follow neither Kemble, no, nor Kean;
Nor do I give to Hamlet time to mull
Either on Alexander or on Yorick's skull;
Nor do I bid Horatio interpose
To save the pair from blows;—
I let each actor haste to make his 'hit.'

XVIII.

But Shakespeare, as you know,
 Though not exactly dull,
 Yet seems—to modern taste—too slow.

So let us hurry!
 We just were speaking of the graveyard flurry:
 The end was nearing:
 The fury of the grappling youths increased!

They fought till, in their fighting, there was fouling,—
 And till the Church—that is to say, the Priest—
 Parted the pair:

(Which was unfair—
 But priests are *always* interfering!)—
 And so this prelate's soul is now, Oh where?
 It is in hell, and howling!

[I stop a moment just to say Amen!
 It serves him right!—
 And may he howl agen and yet agen!—
 And may he find the heat to grow so great
 As to be quite impossible to state
 In mere degrees of Fahrenheit!]

XIX.

From this digression let us now return:
 Perhaps you ask me, What of Fortinbras?
 And what of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

I let them pass!
 I also drop the tedious old Polonius!
 Moreover I may boast
 Of having shelved the Ghost!
 I like a person to be flesh-and-bonius,
 And not a spooky curdler of my blood!

Besides, I take a view
 Which I believe is new:

The Ghost of Hamlet's father is unheeded
 By Hamlet's father's son, who fails to do
 What the Ghost tells him to!

The Spectre therefore is no longer needed:
 He is a mere superfluous bugaboo:
 And so I leave him out.
 To put him in would be a piece of padding.

I merely add—The fencing-scene is cruel!—
 It lacks a delicate *esprit*—
 It should be modelled from a modern duel—
 A little spurt,
 And no one hurt.

XXII.

Now I admit
 That Shakespeare was a mighty master,
 A man of wit—
 A thorough poet—no mere poetaster—
 And yet he always fails, in what?
 He ends each tragedy with a disaster!
 This is his great defect—
 (A fault which I endeavour to correct.)
 A comedy perhaps should have a plot,
 A tragedy should not.
 I say of all such bloody murder—faugh!
 It ought to be forbidden by the law!

XXIII.

A fable had in former times a moral,—
 But morals now are going out of fashion;
 Yet when two youths—each bred to be polite—
 Forget their manners—fly into a passion—
 And leap into a grave and have a fight,—
 (A scene then new)—
 The world, in judging of the duplex quarrel,
 Has ever since expressed a triplex view:
 That is, the fuss
 Is summed up thus:
 Some say, 'The cat will mew!'
 Others prefer to say, 'The dog will have his day!
 And others still, 'Thus runs the world away!'

XXIV.

These triune maxims—(strange as it may be!)—
 Consist of three.
 Now whether all or either
 Or one or two or neither
 Be true or no,—
 I do not care a sumarkee,—
 For lo!
 As with a prophet's vision, I foresee
 That whilst this unfugacious world shall stand,
 And whilst in any solitary land
 There be an only cat to wail,
 Or but a lonely dog to bark,
 So long shall lovers, whispering in the dark,

Sit hand in hand
 Beneath some most exceeding shady oak
 (Whose umbrage shall but dulcify the gloom)—
 And then and there—
 While gnatty dusk shall grow to batty night—
 What time the solemn curfew 'gins to boom—
 The happy pair
 Each to the other softly shall recite
 This ever lovely, lively, deathly tale,—
 And in the telling,
 With bosoms swelling,
 Their mutual voices charmingly shall choke;
 Their mutual hearts, if not already broke,
 Shall break;
 And up and down their mutual backs a shiver
 (Which is a shake)
 Shall send its sweet alternate fiery chill
 And feverish frosty thrill
 For love's dear sake;—
 And from their mutual eyes they shall outpour,
 For drowned Ophelia, tears galore—
 Both fresh and salt—to be another river
 (Perchance a lake)
 Wherein they thus shall drown her o'er and o'er!

xxv.

And though it will occasion no surprise
 That thus in waters trickling from the eyes
 No actual water-lilies can be found
 (Such as Ophelia took
 From out the fatal brook)—
 Yet rosemary and rue,
 And violets too,
 And pansies (each a thought)
 And fennel (herb o' Sundays) shall be brought,—
 With columbines, and crow-flowers,—yea, and others,—
 More beautiful than 'forty thousand brothers'!—
 To strew (oh not her bridal bed!)
 But to bedeck instead
 Her sweetly doleful domicile of Death and Doom!

xxvi.

And oh the buds that bloom
 On such a tomb
 Shall evermore remind us,—

(In language softer than the silkworm's sigh,
Or than the murmur of the butterfly)—
That thus to live in hearts we leave behind us,
Is not to die!

XXVII.

But all is not yet told!

The fair Ophelia's wedding-ring—
Which (had she wed)
Would then have glittered as a little thing—
A wee gold band
Half hidden by her wee white hand—
Has since, by a compensatory fate,
Become transmuted to a finer gold,
And been re-melted and re-cast
In a celestial mould,—
Until at last, at last,
Enlarged and rounded out a thousandfold,
Behold! behold!
It constitutes the circling halo now
Wherewith her maiden and immortal brow
For ever goldenly is aureoled!

[Now the foregoing passage, I opine,
Is fine:
If found in Shakespeare, it would pass for great:
But wait!—
You are about to have an outburst finer!—greater!—
I shall conclude with something quite transcending!—
For I, who am no mere narrator,
No common literary hack,
Have kept a final point of logic back
Wherewith to perorate.

A climax should be quick,—with fireworks in it—
A burst of splendour—over in a minute.

See how this final splurge of mine
Shall like a rocket rise and shine,—
Then drop
Kerflop!]

XXVIII.

Now mark my ultimate and final ending!—
It thus begins:

Alas! Alas!
 All flesh is grass!—
 Which leads us back to where we were before,
 In the old Charnel-yard at Elsinore,
 In the brave days of yore,—
 Where grass still grows (just as it used to do)
 Yet where no more
 Delveth the clownish knave
 Who dug Ophelia's grave.

For what with swigging stoups of ale
 (Obtained at neighbouring inns—
 For it was drawn,
 You know, at Yaughn)—
 Some argue that this burly fellow burst—
 And, argal, that this Delver—he who erst
 Sang at his doleful delving—thus at last
 Stopped singing, and inevitably passed
 With more than just a common, natural groan
 From out the graves of others down into his own.

But such a story—
 (Which, in the main,
 Is true enough)—
 Is yet, in part, mere flimsy stuff—
 Mere fustian :
 For what though Life be transitory?—
 Yet *who* has seen it finish by combustion?
 Oh no!
 Not so!
 For though this doughty Delver was a Dane,
 Yet deigned he not, I trust,
 Thus to combust!

For though this over-weary son of toil
 Might seek to 'shuffle off his mortal coil'—
 And though perhaps, with other frets,
 He also had his tavern debts
 Which he full long had owed,—
 And though for lack of cash
 He may financially have had a 'crash,'
 (Called now a 'crisis,' or for short a 'smash,')
 Yet critics would be chemically wrong,
 And dynamitically much too strong,
 To say he would 'Explode!'

XXIX.

I view this Delver in a different light,
 Nor can I well be wrong if I am right:
 You ask me How I argue? See!
 The fact is known
 And cannot be forgotten
 That long in 'Denmark' 'something has been rotten.'
 What is it?—It is *he*!
 This proves the case to *me*.
 So though from mortal lip I have not heard
 That flowers upon his sepulchre were strown,
 And though I wot not of a graven word,
 Nor of an inference inferentially inferred,
 Whereby in verity it is averred
 That his sarcophagus was bronze or stone,
 Yet still, while Right and Reason shall prevail,—
 And till all Human Wit among mankind
 Shall fail,—
 And till all Wisdom flee the human mind,—
 I here depone
 (Which is the Scotch for 'I declare')
 That as for me, no matter where—
 In all this Vale
 (So termed) of Tears—
 This delving clown
 Ended his years—
 No matter where he flung his pickaxe down—
 No matter where at last he dropped his spade—
 No matter where his humble bones were laid,—
 Yet still, yet still,
 Say it I must, say it I will,
 (For it may justly be inferred,
 And therefore may be wisely said)—
 That having been so very, very long interred
 He must at last be very, very, very dead:

As dead indeed as Genghis Khan
 Or any other ancient man
 Whose death, though now unverifiable,
 Has been for ages undeniable!

For death is death, and *all* men have to face it;
 And though, when centuries pass, we cannot trace it
 To any special sepulchre or carved *Hic jacet*,—
 Yet other grounds than any burial-ground
 Exist to render my conviction sound—
 And thus to make my certitude most certain—

That now the Delver of Ophelia's 'pit'
 (A rôle in which I well remember Burton)
 Is dead indeed—dead as a nit—
 Dead as St. Patrick :
 And hence I now (to use a phrase theatric)
 Will 'drop the curtain.'

xxx.

But hark ! do you applaud me with a shout?
 Do you vociferously call me out?

I re-appear a moment just to mention
 That though the 'play' is not of my invention
 (But Shakespeare's own)
 Yet the 'improvements' in it (which, I fancy
 Are of a kind
 New even to the modern mind)
 Are due to *me* alone,—
 Though I should add
 That I have had
 Some slight assistance from my friend Miss Nancy.

We are not maritally mated,
 Nor are we otherwise related
 Save as our pens have here collaborated.

You know her pedigree: she is the daughter
 Of Mr. Milk who married Mrs. Water:
 So all the blood of all their family
 Is inky ichor that flows clammily.

xxxI.

Now though a plot of Shakespeare or of Dickens
 Most strangely—even while it thickens—
 Keeps growing clear,—
 Yet such a method is a monstrous error:
 It gives unnecessary fear and terror:
 It holds the reader in too great suspense.

Miss Nancy modifies his stupefaction
 And gives his spirits time for a re-action
 By lengthening out the tale with due protraction.

Moreover, toward the close,
 She usually grows
 All tangly
 And all twisty,

All jerky
 And all querky,
 All misty
 And all murky,
 And altogether moonish as the Crescent is of Turkey.
 She never deviates into perfect clarity;
 So with her style cucumbrous,
 And with her wit penumbrous,
 And with her readers slumbrous,—
 Miss Nancy now enjoys great popularity.

xxxii.

I thus have shown to you my plan
 Whereby a tragedy too gory
 May be Miss Nancified
 And turned into a sweet and childlike story:
 Cut out the plot—or cut out all you can—
 Or all that makes you cold and creepy,
 And do your best
 To tell the rest
 In verbiage soporifically sleepy:
 The more you poppy it,
 The more the press at large will copy it:
 What is the use of words but to be wordy?
 The bards of the Elizabethan clan,
 And all the semi-bards of good Queen Anne
 Were not exactly bores, yet they were bory:
 For then the Drama was too Dick the Thiridy:
 The public taste of late was Pinafory:
 But now Miss Nancyism is the rage.

xxxiii.

And so my 'Hamlet,' as I here present it—
 (And which, I do not mean 'for any stage')—
 Gives Hamlet's part in part, with part omitted:
 I have elided, as you see,
 'To be or not to be,
 That is the question!'
 I squelched it at Miss Nancy's own suggestion:
 She thought it questionable—so do I:
 Besides, I do not let the young unhappy Hamlet die.
 And why?
 His death, of course, makes sentimental people cry:—
 So I prevent it!
 My adaptation thus is finely fitted
 For infants of a very tender age.

Moreover, though I may admire a Caesar,
 And tolerate a Nero,
 And pity a Tiglath-Pileser,—
 And though I love Ophelia and would gladly please her,
 Yet Hamlet (as I hold) is not a hero.

He dilly-dallies,
 He shilly-shallies!
 He 'sweeps to his revenge,' but how?
 Why, simply with a mere jog-trot!
 A hero, therefore, he is not!
 A proper hero should have manly vigour:
 And so my hero is the grim Grave-Digger,
 —A man whose lightest breath is strong,
 And so he lendeth to my song
 The wholesome foamy creamy flavour
 Of all the ale whereof he was the swigger;
 And though the old rip-staver
 Perhaps had gout
 Or 'rheumatiz'—
 (As incidental to his mouldy 'biz'—)
 So since he was no lunkhead of a lout,
 But was a rogue of honest ways,
 (As rogues are *not*, in modern days,)—
 Green be the turf above him!
 None know him but to love him,
 None name him but to praise!

XXXIV.

[My poem—which I hope you like—
 Is coming out,
 Printed in green,
 In the next number of the *Blooming Bike*—
 My favourite magazine—
 A periodical which is the likeliest
 To give my piece a 'run' the most bicycliest.]¹

PARIS, December, 1896.

¹ The above is the satire referred to in the Preface as intended to illustrate —(good-naturedly, I hope!)—certain high-flown and extra-magnificent forms of expression which, just at present, are current in certain *fin-de-siècle* magazines and periodicals both in Great Britain and the United States.

'QUALIS VITA, FINIS ITA.'

THIS pithy Latin proverb loses its idiomatic charm by a literal rendering into English.

To translate it—(as most of the dictionaries do)—by the expression: 'As is the life, so is its end'—is to substitute what is stilted and awkward for what is pat and perfect.

This quaint and venerable maxim is more than a '*bon mot*,' or a 'wise saw': it is an epitome of the whole philosophy of man's moral duty and responsibility, and of his consequent reward or punishment—all expressed in one immortal motto.

It is as if a gold medallion should be so stamped and minted as to show both its sides at once: for these four Latin words—*Qualis Vita, finis ita*—foretell, in a single breath, the diametrically opposite results of a lifetime of righteousness or of iniquity.

So masterly a phrase may well be left to stand in its own unrivalled phraseology—untranslated because untranslatable.

Nevertheless, if this perfect Latin pearl is to be dissolved into an imperfect English imitation, the meaning is this:—

A man's character determines his death-bed. To live virtuously is to die victoriously. On the contrary, to a mean and ignoble man, death is not only a defeat but a punishment. In other words, this inflexible, uncompromising, and Rhadamanthian maxim sums up the ethical rule for the governance of human conduct in a probationary world.

Meanwhile, even the most casual reader of the following ballad need hardly be told that the use therein made of this famous adage can claim no warrant either in authentic history, or in legendary lore, but only in poetic fancy.

The hermitage here referred to is in the mountainous region of West Syria, where the Maronites have many monasteries—all of which owe a partial (but by no means an absolute) allegiance to the Papal Power at Rome.

'*QUALIS vita,*
Finis ita!'

Sang the Monk of Ybber-Quord,—
But the Latin
Of his matin
Made no mention of the Lord.

This omission
Caused suspicion
In the Devil's pious mind,—
For he dearly
And sincerely
Loves the souls of all mankind.

Twingeing, panting
At the chanting
Of a doctrine so unsound,—
Vexed and worried,
Stung and flurried,—
Up he sprang from underground.

'Monk, thy notion
Of devotion,—
Which' (quoth he) 'disturbs my ear,—
Is a libel
On the Bible,—
And will ruin me, I fear.

'My vocation
Is Damnation :
So thy song excites my ire :
To live purely
Will most surely
Add no Christians to my fire !

'When my fuel
Needs renewal
I make Churchmen disagree,—
Till their wrangles
And their jangles
Doom the Doctors down to me !

'Woe infernal—
Wrath eternal—
Pitchfork—brimstone—or, in brief,
Hell's chief terrors,
Are for errors,
Not of conduct, but belief !

'Faith unbounded
Yet unfounded,—
True religion kept alive
By dissension
And contention,—
These are arts by which I thrive !

'Since my mission
Is Perdition,—
And since Heresy is wrong,—
Do not spite me
And affright me
By an irreligious song !

'Monk, thy distich
Atheistic—
Pointing men to virtue's path—
Now defeats me,—
For it cheats me
Of the victims of my wrath !

‘Hush it! stop it!
Cease it! drop it!
I prefer the Sabbath Bell!—
For thy singing
Is not bringing
Any souls to me in Hell!’

—Then with curses
On the verses—
And with limping (being lame)—
Teeth a-gnashing,
Eyes a-flashing—
Fled the Fiend to quench his flame.

Joy!—for straightway
From Heaven’s gateway
To the Monk of Ybber-Quord,
Spake—O wonder!
Not with thunder,
But in whisper—Christ the Lord.

‘Monk, thy measure
Gives Me pleasure,’
Softly said the Voice Divine,
‘For the Latin
Of thy matin
Is a missing text of Mine!’

‘*Qualis vita,*
Finis ita!—
Can a Scripture truer be?
None who quote it
Know who wrote it:
It was writ, O Monk, by Me!

‘Time erases
All the traces
Of the handiwork of man:
This shall linger,—
For My finger
Traced it as no mortal can.

‘Words of sages
Live for ages:
Words of Mine shall never die!
What I spelt there
As I knelt there,—
While the scowling mob stood by,—

'Still remains there,—
 For no rains there—
 No, nor frost, nor mist, nor dew—
 No wild beast there—
 No high priest there
 Can efface it from the view!

*'Qualis Vita,
 Finis ita!—*
 It abides there on the sand!—
 Fading never—
 Shining ever
 As a light to every land!

'Bid the Psalters
 Of My altars
 Psalm it as thy matin saith,—
 For oh surely
 To live purely
 Takes away the sting of Death!

'Hell is flameless
 To the blameless:
 I was in it, three days long!
 Did it harm Me
 Or alarm Me?
 Nay, for I had wrought no wrong!

'Guilt will harrow
 Bone and marrow:
 Vice goes shuddering to the grave:
 Virtue peerless
 Enters fearless:
 To be just is to be brave!

'Gain ill-gotten—
 Honour rotten—
 Pious fraud in Church and State—
 Priestly meanness
 And uncleanness—
 Sins like these, oh how I hate!

'So, no choral
 Writ or oral—
 No, nor chant of cherubim
 Can be sweeter
 Or completer
 Than thy pure and holy hymn.

'Be the Latin
Of thy matin
Every morn, O Monk, renewed!—
I confess it,
And I bless it
As a lost beatitude!

'Thou hast found it!
So resound it!
Trill it! chant it! make it known!
Not Pandéan
Is thy paean!—
It is Christian, and My Own!

'Dagon—Ammon—
Moloch—Mammon—
Yea, the Devil in the Pit—
When they hear it,—
Let them fear it
As a rune that I have writ.

'Not Chaldaic,
Not Hebraic
Was the language that I chose:
No inscription
In Egyptian!—
I out-date the Pharaohs!

'*Qualis vita,*
Finis ita!—
Lilt it as a Roman rhyme!—
For the Latin
Of thy matin
Is the tongue of every clime.

'Chant it! trill it!—
For I will it!—
Rhyme it! chime it!—for, indeed,
It is better
Than the letter
Of the Church's written creed!

'Monk, thy measure
Gives me pleasure—
Hast thou finished? Re-begin!
Thy hosanna
Shall be manna
In a wilderness of sin!

'Sing it Sunday!
Sing it Monday!
Sing it every day in seven!
Sing it! preach it!
Go and teach it!
It will bring Me souls to Heaven!

'I appoint thee
And anoint thee
To be chorister of Mine,—
And, O Hermit,
To confirm it,
Hark! for Hell shall give a sign!'

—Then a rumbling,
And a grumbling
Could be heard from underground!
Was it frightful?
Nay, delightful!
For what meant th' infernal sound?

Lo! the quivering
Was the shivering
Of the Fiend, whose fire was out!—
Yea, how pleasing!
He was freezing!—
And will freeze to death, no doubt!

—'*Qualis vita,*
Finis ita'
Sings the Monk of Ybber-Quord¹,—
And the Latin
Of his matin
Is a rubric of the Lord.

PARIS, January, 1897.

¹ The name of the Hermitage is here disguised; for, just at present in Syria, though the Maronites and the Druzes are not prosecuting their religious and bloody war, yet their temporary reconciliation is only skin-deep; and accordingly their old practice of mutual persecution may be at any day resumed—to the scandal of the Orient.

— The scriptural text which furnishes the foundation of the above poem is in St. John's Gospel, viii. 6: 'Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not. . . . And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground.'

THE TWO OFFERINGS.

A RICH Thessalian, choosing from his herd
 A hundred oxen, fatted them with corn,—
 Gilded them each on every hoof and horn,—
 And, though he grudged the cost which he incurred,
 (For he was miserly) yet he averred
 That by so rich a bribe he could suborn
 Great Zeus himself: to whom, one festal morn,
 He burnt the beasts: an offering long deferred.

Then with the crackle of a thunder-peal—
 Whereat the Miser quaked—the God replied:
 ‘I saw a Beggar fling a pinch of meal
 Into my altar-flame. He far outvied
 Thy worthless homage! *His* was true and real—
 While *thine* is but hypocrisy and pride!’



SONG¹.

(A free rendering of the original.)

I.

IF only the dear little blossoms
 Could guess at the wound in my heart,
 Their dew with my tears would be mingled,
 To cool and to comfort the smart.

II.

If only the nightingales knew it
 Their throats would be loud with a lay
 To solace my soul in its anguish
 By warbling my sorrow away.

III.

If only the stars as they twinkle
 Could hear how I groan and complain,
 They hither would hasten from heaven
 To pity my torturing pain.

IV.

But nobody dreams how I suffer,
 For nobody knows of the smart
 Save only the maid who hath riven—
 Oh, riven asunder!—my heart!

¹ From the German of Heine.

FIRST, LAST, AND FOR EVER!

AN OLD BACHELOR'S REMINISCENCE OF HIS BOYHOOD.

O BONNIE Helen!—angel of my youth!—
 It was thy luck to quit this world of woe
 And leave me in it many a year ago!
 A maid in Paradise keeps young, forsooth!
 But here on Earth, Time with his envious tooth
 Gnaws at a mortal man—and nips him so—
 O Nell, that now to look at me . . . But no!
 For I am old and wrinkled!—and, in truth,
 Fair lass, I would not have thee see me thus!
 These ugly scars of mine would fright thee, sweet!
 But they shall heal!—my youth shall match with thine!
 Is Heaven for *thee*? Not so!—it is for *us*!
 Art thou God's angel? Nay!—for when we meet,
 Dear Nell, I shall demand thee back as mine!

*A GOLDEN OPINION.*

The following incident was told to the author by a young Copt of Cairo—a theological student who had just returned from a visit of investigation into the Coptic type of Christianity now flourishing in Abyssinia under the fostering genius of King Menelik. The young devotee related his experience thus :—

I.

PERPLECT with pondering on the Heavenly Will
 I climbed a Cross-crowned hill,—
 Where dwelt a Hermit with a hoary head,
 To whom I knelt and said,
 'Thy years have made thee wise in sacred lore:
 So tell me, I implore,
 O holy man, what church, or sect, or creed
 Is worthiest of my heed?'

II.

The Saint upraised his Crucifix on high
 And pointing to the sky,
 Cried out, 'I bid thee pay but small respect
 To church, or creed, or sect!
 Vex not thy soul with vain dogmatic strife!
 But heed thy way of life—
 Live purely and die bravely—God may then
 Want thee in heaven! Amen.'

THE DOOMSDAY BOOK.

*'The moving Finger writes, and, having writ,
 Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
 Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.'*

(From the *Rubaiyat*, an Arabic poem by Omar Khayyam of Khorasan, eleventh century, translated by the late Edward Fitzgerald.)

O MOVING Finger which no eye can see,
 Yet which records of mortals each event
 That marks how well or ill their lives are spent,—
 I need not ask what thou hast writ of *me*!
 I guess what the accusing scroll must be!—
 Time squandered!—Hope deferred!—and Good Intent
 Left unfulfilled!—These faults I so repent,
 O Mystic Scribe, that now I beg of thee—
 Though thou be powerless to blot out the past—
 Yet to thy screed of my remaining days
 (Now few!) in charity append
 A final postscript saying that at last
 I turned my footsteps unto Wisdom's Ways
 And walked therein awhile, before the End!

PARIS, February, 1897.

APPENDIX



THE GODS OF THE VIKINGS

OR A SKETCH OF

THE OLD NORSE MYTHOLOGY

GIVING A CURSORY VIEW OF THE CHIEF

EDDAIC MYTHS, FABLES, LEGENDS, AND FOLK-LORE

CURRENT IN THE ODINIC TIMES AMONG THE GOTHIC

ANCESTORS OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING RACE

APPENDIX

It is twenty-five years since I first felt the fascination of the Old Norse myths ; and as a balladist I have ever since made a free use of these quaint fables ; for they temptingly offer a stock of poetic images of a kind not yet worn out, nor grown stale, but which, on the contrary, though as old as the hills, are as fresh as the winds.

But though the Norse myths are indigenous to our English tongue, they are seldom introduced into our current English literature ; they remain popularly unknown ; allusions to them are not readily understood ; in fact, multitudes of readers to whom Jupiter, Apollo, and Mount Olympus are as familiar as A B C, are puzzled and annoyed at seeing—even in a book of poetry—a chance mention of so unfamiliar a name as Loki, or Freyia, or the Urdar Fount, or Ragnârok.

The modern mind is quite apt, in learning things new, to forget things old ; and probably among the finest things which the world has once known and then forgotten, there has been nothing finer than the early pagan mythology of the Norsemen.

Accordingly, as an appropriate affix to an edition of poems, many of which contain Norse allusions, I will here give some account of this noble system of early Gothic myths ; especially as these splendid fables, however little in vogue at the present time, were once the living beliefs of the founders of the English nation and its literature.

It is not to the Romans—though they were five centuries in Britain—that we owe the English tongue : we owe it to the Northmen.

The Greek and Roman mythology is alien to us ; we borrow it ; but the Norse is ours by birthright ; it is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh ; and instead of remaining in disuse and obscurity, it is well worthy of a wide diffusion throughout the English-speaking world.

Of course, the little that I can here offer in this limited Appendix will not be an exhaustive essay, but only a helpful glossary.

§ I. PRELIMINARY HISTORICAL DATA.

Christianity was a thousand years old before it conquered Scandinavia. St. Olaf received a grudging welcome in the grim North. The Norskers held stubbornly fast to their early pagan

religion, loth to let it go. The blood of the Northern Teutons (when not under the excitement of war and conquest) was always calm, lazy, and sluggish, or, as the moderns say, 'conservative.' The Norse intellect had less of the quick mercury of change than was characteristic of the South of Europe, where the Latin races had already founded Christian Empires whilst the Scandinavian peninsula still lay under the 'dim religious light' of polytheistic times.

Perhaps if any tribe in Europe could have saved the old northern religion, the Scandinavian Teutons were just the tough and honest yeomanry to have kept this primæval faith intact, and to have bequeathed it as a vital force to posterity.

But the early religion of Scandinavia, though one of the most interesting of all the paganisms known to history, was foredoomed to perish; for with all its power to fascinate a primitive and rude people, it was a religion for an epoch, and for a climate, not for all time, nor for the whole world.

In fact, it was a religion which contained within itself the sure omen of its own decay; for it prophesied the downfall and destruction of its own gods; and if its veritable gods were doomed to death, how could its mere fanciful tenets survive as living beliefs?

'Nowhere else, perhaps, in the whole history of Christianity,' says Max Müller, 'has the missionary been brought face to face with a race of gods who were believed by their own worshippers to be doomed to death.'

This discriminating remark by a wise critic explains the transitoriness of the Norse paganism, a faith which has long since wholly passed away from the affections, and almost from the memories, of the descendants of the Norsemen—or at least is not now popularly known outside of Iceland.

Stricken with its own inherent mortality, the religion of the Vikings died a slow death during the eleventh century; and nothing remains of it except a few embalmed relics in the form of literary curiosities—chiefly poems and sagas; but these scanty hyperborean classics, meagre as they are, constitute a quaint and weird memorial of a hardy race of heroes whose home was on the frozen edge of the Arctic Circle.

Whence came these wanderers before they settled finally in the icy North?

§ 2. THE ENTRANCE OF THE GOTHS INTO EUROPE.

Migrating at an unknown date from the far and vague East, the earliest Goths (or Teutons) began to emerge into the dim, half-light of uncertain history, by setting up their banners along the banks of the Danube in the fourth century.

They all spoke, at that epoch, one common national tongue, as is proven by Bishop Ulfilla's Moeso-Gothic translation (which he then made for them) of a portion of the Christian Scriptures.

A codex or manuscript of this translation is now to be seen in the Upsåla University in Sweden, and is called 'The Silver Book'—the letters being silver, on a vellum of violet.

Shortly after Ulfilla's death, his swarming countrymen—a nomadic race—began to divide themselves (in the fifth century) into different bands, and to disperse Northward—some to the Baltic, others to Norway, and a few to the British Isles.

These tribal dispersions gave rise to several new dialects and tongues—especially to the Saxon and the Danish.

Moreover, in spite of 'The Silver Book,' the Goths of the North, for six centuries after it was written, still kept their early faith in Odin and Thor.

§ 3. THE VIKING INVASION OF ENGLAND.

Danish dragon-ships went 'pirating' up and down British rivers as early as A. D. 793; and the Danish occupation of Great Britain eventually extended throughout the Northern half of England; so that in the English King Athelstan's time (who lived till A. D. 940) every Northern English family was said to be Danish either on the father's or on the mother's side.

By the term 'Danes,' however, must be understood the 'Norsemen' in general; for although the first bands of adventurous Danskers who harried the banks of the Thames were from the Skaggerack (or the Viking 'head centre'), yet the great bulk of the other Norsemen who promptly followed in the wake of the pioneer rovers—and who soon penetrated Ireland, Scotland, and the Orkneys—were not from Denmark, but from the Norwegian skerries and fiords.

§ 4. WHY THE NORSE MYTHS ARE CALLED ICELANDIC.

The language which the Vikings carried with them into the British Isles was at first called Danish or Norse; but it afterward took the epithet 'Icelandic' from the fact that the general Northern or Scandinavian speech was first reduced to writing, not in Denmark nor in Norway, but in Iceland; for though Denmark, Norway, and Iceland had in the tenth century, as they have now, the same language, differing only in dialect (as English differs from Scotch), yet Iceland happened to be ahead of Norway and Denmark in introducing into the illiterate North the art of letters.

In fact, during the period known as the Dark Ages, the Arctic commonwealth of Iceland—like her own Aurora Borealis—was the Northern Light of Europe.

Let us therefore glance a moment at the shining history of this remarkable island, a unique country whereof Max Müller says: 'Iceland was discovered, peopled, and civilized in the ninth century; and in the nineteenth the language there spoken is still the dialect of Harold Fairhair, and the stories told there are still the stories of the Edda, the venerable Grandmother.'

§ 5. THE FIRST COLONIZATION OF ICELAND.

The darkest of the 'dark ages' was the tenth century.

Just before the dawn of the tenth century, whilst the old heathenism still clung to the North like an unmelted frost, a small band of Norwegian patriots, seeking civil liberty, sailed from their native country to Iceland (which they found uninhabited); and they there planted, in a safe solitude, a free commonwealth.

Those early colonizers, though pagans, yet in moral worth were like the later Pilgrims of Plymouth Rock: and the names of the original Icelandic settlers—the Ingólfs, the Thorólfs, and the Skallagrimms—have ever since been looked upon in that historic island with the same reverence which in New England has always invested the names of Bradford, Carver, and Standish.

The thousandth anniversary of the colonization of Iceland was celebrated with pomp and ceremony at Reikavik in 1874; but no sooner had the festival been successfully held, than the idea was broached that the Icelandic millennium, in the light of exact history, had thus mistakenly been commemorated thirty years too soon; so that the real millennial anniversary has not yet been reached.

Early reinforced by refugees whom King Harold Fairhair of Norway drove out of his disobedient settlements in Britain, and whom he compelled to flee to the far North for an asylum, the Icelandic colony soon became the growing nucleus of the Norwegian opposition to the king's policy; which was the policy of uniting all Norway, for the first time, under one crown.

Whether King Fairhair was a despot (as he is often painted), or whether his consolidating scheme was a stroke of high statesmanship, such as the modern world has seen in the unification of Italy under Cavour, and of Germany under Bismarck, is a question with which this Appendix is not concerned.

All that our synopsis finds needful to say on this point is, that King Fairhair had sworn a famous oath never to cut his hair or beard till he had reduced all the Norwegian earldoms into feudal unity.

In carrying his oath into effect, he first moulded the mainland to his will, and then disciplined the refractory islands—all but one.

Iceland he spared.

And why?

Simply because the far-off spot did not seem to him to be worth the trouble of visiting it with his vengeance.

He did not foresee the quick growth, and the future glory, of a chilly, shivering, isolated colony, six hundred miles north-west of Norway; and he mistakenly deemed that the exiles felt themselves imprisoned, benumbed, and repentant under the rigours of their 65th parallel of North latitude.

But, on the contrary, the Icelandic colony, being thus let alone, prospered as if by magic.

The climate, which at first seemed to threaten the settlers with untold inconvenience, proved to be the stimulating cause of their social coherence, strengthening their family-ties, and giving to their home-life a unique stability.

Let us inquire into this curious fact.

§ 6. THE CIVILIZING EFFECT OF RAIN AND FOG.

Things evil are often blessings in disguise. The good influence of a bad climate is not to be lightly estimated in accounting for national development.

Take an instructive illustration.

'An Englishman's house is his castle.'

Nothing in all England has contributed so much to the beauty of English home-life as the rude English climate is steadily doing—a climate which, every year, is execrable from November to May—a climate of rain, fog, and raw wind: but it is this very rain, fog, and raw wind that make the English fireside: and it is the English fireside that constitutes the centre and symbol of the English 'home.'

In like manner Iceland is a little Britain—a country with a cheerful, blazing fire on every hearth—a community owing an incalculable debt to its indoor life.

The 'Bon Dieu,' in dealing with Britain and Iceland, has been severely kind to both these northern, fog-wet, and insular countries; for in each of them,

'Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face.'

The 'Shepherd of Salisbury Plain' was right in saying, 'All weathers are good'; and he might have added that in England the long wet weather outdoes even the Public Debt in being 'a national benefit.'

And as for the United States, think of what the domestic virtues are likely to become in the Great Republic after the blessed experience of a few more centuries of howling blizzards, of hospitable hearth-fires, and of hallowed Yuletides!

§ 7. THE ICELANDIC CLASSICS AND THEIR FREE SPIRIT.

It was from the British Isles, or possibly from 'Old Ireland,' that the young Icelandic Colony received a few recruits who took with them into Iceland the precious art of letters; an art which, though known long before to Bishop Ulfilla's Moeso-Goths on the banks of the Danube, had not yet reached Norway; but as soon as it was introduced into Iceland the intelligent Icelanders knew how to put it to a grand use; for the Icelandic patriots, in their enforced isolation, began at once the proud task of creating, not only a Commonwealth, but also a Literature.

The able-minded exiles succeeded so well in both these undertakings that mediaeval history has no more illustrious chapter than the early chronicles of Iceland as a young and free republic, famed equally for its laws and for its letters.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, the Norwegian royal champion of feudalism—the haughty Fairhair—was not less successful in his national scheme for consolidating the several Earldoms of Norway under a single crown: he made himself sole king: he compacted all Norway into one kingdom: he so completely fulfilled his oath that he sent a merry message to his barber, saying, ‘Now come and cut my hair and beard!’

Whereupon a Norse nobleman, the Earl Ragnel, volunteered to act as the barber on this occasion, and the king sat to him for the service.

I may add that this Earl Ragnel (or Ragnvald) was the father of the celebrated Rollo of Normandy, the same gaunt and raw-boned Rollo who sailed up the Seine and captured Rouen: so that the whole proud line of the Norman kings of England—Plantagenets and all!—sprang from a barber!

The cutting of Harold’s hair and beard was the token of a great work *finished*: while the introduction of letters into Iceland—at about the same date—was the token of a great work *begun*.

The work that was just then *finished* was political, and gave to Norway the stern autonomy of a powerful government, centralized for the first time: the work that was just then *begun* was scholastic, and consisted of the slow process of recording—with pen, ink, and paper—in actual books—the hitherto unwritten poetry and folklore of the North.

What, therefore, is this earliest Norse literature, which thus owes its first transcript (in other words, its first title to be called a ‘literature’ at all), not to Norway, but to Iceland?

It is a poetical record of the Norse or Scandinavian mythology: and, as such, it consists of a series of rhythmical lays or ballads which, taken as a whole, give a complete account of the old pagan religion of the ancestors of the present English-speaking world.

Hence such a primal literature, however rude, ought to be of more than a mere antiquarian interest to the 130 millions of people who now speak the English tongue.

Dating back to an early and Arian origin, and enriched by a later and Gothic mother-wit, the best of the Norse fables have no superiors in any mythology; and they furnish to modern Britons, and to their American cousins, a plain proof (if such a proof were needed) that our Gothic sires in the bleak North were men of big brains and wise thoughts.

A reverence for ancestors is itself a religion; and, certainly, beyond all gainsaying, the religion of our Viking forefathers (which is what we call their mythology) is worthy of the brave men who made it, and entitles their memory to a profound modern respect.

If, therefore, the commemoration of the thousandth anniversary of the Settlement of Iceland was held at a wrong date, no harm would come of correcting a *fin-de-siècle* error by a new millennial celebration—to be held, say, A. D. 1905.

There is also another error to be corrected, an error into which no reader of this Appendix must be allowed to lapse: I allude to the common notion that our Gothic ancestors were a brutal type of semi-savages. This is not true. It is a groundless charge.

Nor is the vulgar verdict against the grim old Teutons at all just when we are told that as their chief virtue was valour, so their only religion was revenge.

On the contrary, with all their vandalism, they never built a 'Temple to Moloch' for the burning of little children in a fire-pit, as the sacred King Solomon did on the Mount of Olives!

Moreover, the Goths, if they were neither so devout as the Jews, nor so polished as the Greeks, were nevertheless the noblest Barbarians that ever lived.

There was never a time in all their long history—no, not once in any land or epoch!—when they did not possess the one supreme civic virtue, which is the Love of Liberty!

Blue-eyed and clear-headed, honest and manly, warlike yet not brutal, they excelled all the other rough races of the world in an early perception of the dignity of Human Nature, and in a proud passion for the Rights of Man.

For instance, Trial by Jury—which is sometimes said to have been invented by 'good King Alfred of England'—was already a common custom among the old Goths in Scandinavia before King Alfred was born:—as Dahlman has shown.

Montesquieu paid to the Scandinavians an eloquent homage, for he said of them that they founded civil freedom in Europe. In fact, in his memorable eulogy on the Norsemen he declared: 'The great glory of Scandinavia, and what ought to commend its people beyond every other nation on earth, is, that they were the chief originators of the liberty of Europe, that is, of almost all the liberty now existing among mankind. . . . It was in the North that these valiant nations were bred who left their native Orient to abolish tyrants and slaves, and to teach men that Nature having made mankind equal, it was therefore against reason that human beings should submit to thralldom.'

Mallet, writing as a Genevan a hundred years ago, said:—

'Is it not well known that the most flourishing and celebrated states of Europe owe originally to the northern nations whatever liberty they now enjoy, either in their constitution, or in the spirit of their government?'

Samuel Laing adds his ringing testimony as a modern Englishman in the following words:—

'All that men hope for of good government and future improvement in their physical and moral condition, all that civilized men enjoy, at this day, of civil, religious, and political liberty—the British constitution, representative legislation, trial by jury, security of property, freedom of mind and person, the influence of public opinion over the conduct of public affairs, the Reformation, the

liberty of the press, the spirit of the age, all that is, or has been, of value to man in modern times as a member of society, either in Europe or in the New World, may be traced to the spark left burning upon our shores by these northern barbarians.'

Prof. R. B. Anderson, of the University of Wisconsin, himself a Scandinavian, pungently says:—

'In the old Gothic religion were embedded principles and elements which had a tendency to make its votaries brave, independent, honest, just, charitable, prudent, temperate, and liberty-loving; principles and morals which, in due course of time, and under favourable circumstances, evolved the Republic of Iceland, the Magna Charta of England, and the Declaration of American Independence.'

In view of such testimonies as the foregoing, the Norse mythology ought not to be flippantly undervalued by the English-speaking race!

But what is the fact?

The fact is, that though the sparkling Norse myths—(bright as the icicles where they grew!)—have come down to us like family-jewels from our forefathers; yet *we*, the neglectful descendants of those myth-makers, have paid a too careless heed to the value of these ancient heirlooms; for though the literary preciousness of such beautiful fables begins now to be tardily acknowledged by a few sympathetic critics, both in England and America, yet so far as the general public is concerned, in both these countries, these Norse treasures still lie in the limbo of things unknown.

There may be perpetual reasons why the North Pole will never be easily reached; but there is no reason why the Arctic myths should not be conveniently explored.

In fact, such a familiar exploration is already in progress, furnishing no small delight to a few antiquarian specialists and bookworms; and perhaps by-and-by the many-headed public, who are always and everywhere agape in search of a new thing, will be making the Norse mythology a 'fashionable fad'; running after it as people run after the last new novel; for certainly such readers would find the ancient folk-lore of their forefathers to be a literature more full of strangeness than the strangest type of modern fiction.

This ancient Gothic poetry, belonging not only to Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, but also, by a secondary heredity, to Great Britain and the United States, is now at last in a fair way to be studied in British and American Universities, like the other great mythologies of the world.

And why not?

If young men and maidens are sent to college to learn of the Stone of Sisyphus, and of the Wheel of Ixion, why should they not learn also of the Spear of Odin, and of the Hammer of Thor?

§ 8. THE WESTWARD COURSE OF EMPIRE.

The American Republic will soon, on its Western prairies, count Norsemen by the million; all of them citizens by adoption; and good citizens too!—none better!

In America there is already a New Norseland, just as there has long been a New Erin.

Meanwhile the Norse immigrant, on his entrance into the United States, has an advantage of which the Celt cannot so confidently boast; for the Norseman, before arriving, is already one of the earliest ancestors of the American people—one of the primal Americans; and no matter whether or not the Norwegian sea-rover Liff (or Leiff) saw Cape Cod in the Christian year 1001 or 1002, yet every Norseman of the present day, whether born at the Naze or under the Midnight Sun, is by his birthright, and from his cradle, half an American; so that when at last he leaves Norway for the United States, and pushes westward from Boston or New York to Wisconsin or Minnesota, he soon feels that the American people are not only Sons of the Plymouth Pilgrims, but are also Grandsons of the Viking Goths.

§ 9. THE TWO EDDAS.

It was Buckle's theory that volcanic countries breed poetic temperaments, and powerfully stimulate the human fancy: a theory which finds a plausible corroboration in the supposed literary influence of Vesuvius and Etna upon the long line of Italian poets—Virgil, Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Ariosto, and the rest.

Burning craters may naturally awaken glowing thoughts.

Nevertheless, streams of lava, earthquakes, lightnings, tempests, all the great throes of external nature, are not enough in themselves alone to give a literature a poetic quality: for poets (as Shelley said) must also

‘learn in suffering
What they teach in song.’

The early skalds of Iceland, in their equipment as balladists, were not lacking in the twofold inspiration that comes, on the one hand, from volcanic scenery, and, on the other, from human sorrow and distress.

It was in a small island of twenty-five volcanoes, with the accompaniments of geysers and glaciers, and with the still keener adjuncts of exile and persecution;—it was in the midst of such natural scenes, and of such ~~unnatural~~ trials, that the primal bards of our Gothic race burst out, more than a thousand years ago, into a rude but rich poetry, which probably the world will never

‘willingly let die.’

As soon as the art of letters became known in Iceland, the first use to which it was put was in transcribing and preserving this primitive Scandinavian poetry—the transcript consisting of lyrics

and ballads illustrating the Norse mythology, or the pagan religion of our Viking sires.

This religion, which is now a mere dead record, but which was then a living belief, was taken down by Icelandic scribes from the lips of their grandfathers and grandmothers, just as Jacob and William Grimm, seven or eight centuries afterwards, wrote down the folk-lore of Germany from the lips of the German peasantry.

These two compilations of oral traditions—one Icelandic and the other German, one made in mediaeval and the other in modern days—resulted, in each case, in the timely committal to writing of a body of strange and quaint myths and legends which might otherwise have passed wholly and for ever from the memory of mankind.

The early Norse literature, which was thus first collected and chronicled in Iceland, has come down to us in two separate sets of vellum-writings, called the two Eddas,—the first or elder Edda comprising about forty ballads or folk-songs (not rhymed, but alliterative), and the second consisting of a still larger budget of prose chronicles and tales.

These two Norse collections—first of poetry, and then of prose—were made perhaps half a century apart; and as the second was done mainly to illustrate the first, it is the first, or elder, or poetic Edda, that is the real *fons et origo* of the old Norse literature.

The word Edda is Icelandic, and means literally ‘a great-grandmother,’ or, metaphorically, any far-back ancestress.

Down to late years, Danish, English, and other antiquarians had maintained (with Benjamin Thorpe) the erroneous opinion that the elder or poetic Edda was collected by Sæmund, a monk who was born at Oddi, in Iceland, in the eleventh century; and hence this group of earliest Icelandic or Norse poems has hitherto been familiarly styled Sæmund’s Edda; though the present Scandinavian professors at Oxford find no authority for connecting Sæmund’s name with either of the Eddas.

The second or prose collection—or, as it is commonly called, the younger Edda—(a kind of paraphrase of the first)—was written for the most part by Snorri, a distinguished Norse kinsman of Sæmund; and this prose compilation is correctly styled Snorri’s Edda, to distinguish it from its predecessor, which is incorrectly claimed as Sæmund’s Edda.

The two Eddas, taken together—one the poetic original, and the other the prose commentary—constitute what may be called the Bible of the old pagan religion of the North.

And what does this old pagan Bible contain that can interest or profit the Christian world?

Let us examine these mediaeval vellums without prejudice, and we shall find in them many weird and magnificent fables, legends, allegories, and emblems, some of which are worthy to rank with the grandest fancies ever conceived by the brain of man.

§ 10. THE MARROW AND MEANING OF THE NORSE MYTHS.

As might be expected of a mythology adapted to the rawest and coldest of all countries, the one keynote of the Norse impersonations of Nature was the *idealization of fire*: for fire was the chief necessity of the climate—a necessity doubly imperative—fire as giving *heat*, and fire as giving *light*.

This twofold boon (heat and light) was what the Norselanders were always thinking of, and what they were always wishing for—either at their hearthstones in the blazing logs, or out of doors in the brief sunshine of their hyperborean skies, or in their fond religious forelookings to a brighter world.

In thus moulding their myths around the central idea of fire, they developed a cosmogony which taught—

First, that by a *quicken*ing heat the world was created ;

Second, that by a *foster*ing heat the world is sustained ; and

Third, that by a *consum*ing heat the world will be destroyed ; but destroyed for the benign purpose of giving place to a new and better system of things.

Consider how natural such a faith was to an Arctic mind !

The Persians have proudly and poetically styled themselves ‘fire worshippers’ ; yet their indolent and sedate genuflexions before the rising sun—in a land of perennial rose-gardens and nightingales—has little of the intense adoration with which a Greenlander, or an Esquimaux, or a fur-clad Nova Zemblan hails the self-same luminary as its bright orb bursts into view after months of tarriance in the underworld.

The Icelanders greet the sun every morning, according to a pretty custom which Dr. Vigfusson thus describes :—

‘In Iceland,’ he says, ‘children, immediately after getting out of bed in the morning, are made to run out of doors bare-headed, there to say a short prayer or verse, and when they return “bid good-day”—a good-day being not allowable till this is done. This is called “to fetch the good-morning.”’

Such a statement—from the pen of a native Icelfander—speaks volumes as to the value of sunshine in the estimation of a people who live for three-quarters of every year in a sunless land—a country where time is reckoned, not by days, but by nights.

§ 11. THE HEAVEN OF HEAVENS.

Accordingly, with a bold fancy—born of an intense longing for light and cheer—the most northern branch of the old Northmen, in expressing through their mythology their highest religious anticipations, imagined for themselves, as their future and eternal resting-place, a perfect counterpart to all the darkness of their earthly and frigid clime ; or, in other words, they fabricated in their day-dreams a gilded and shining Paradise, called Gimli (or Himmel, or Heaven)—a supernal pleasure-ground of ineffable light and glory—‘above the brightness of the sun.’

In the midst of this Gimli (or 'Heaven of Heavens') the Norse myths locate the one and only immortal and omnipotent Lord of the universe, the God alike of the Bible and of the Eddas: for, just as in the Book of Genesis He is quoted as saying, 'Let there be light!' so in the Eddaic songs He is quaintly referred to as 'He who sent the heat.'

This Northern and threefold deification of fire—first, as creative; next, as preservative; and last, as destructive—will of course recur to students of the East Indian Vedas: wherein the Triune God of the Hindoos is called Brahma, the Creator; Vishnu, the Saviour; and Siva, the Destroyer.

§ 12. GINUNGA-GAP, OR CHAOS.

The beginning of mundane things, the primordial void out of which the earth was finally to be formed—in other words, the chaos immediately preceding the cosmos—is described in the elder Edda as a vast and empty abyss called Ginunga-Gap, or the Yawning Chasm.

This great gulf was the once-vacant region which the habitable globe now fills.

Before the formation of the earth, this primal chaos or vacuum—a blank zone of desolation, waiting for the creative magic of Nature—was a barren realm which is poetically supposed to have stretched itself out between an imaginary North and South, and to have remained for ages an indefinable Nowhere; yet not wholly without bounds, for it was bounded on the North by frost, and on the South by fire.

So the beginning of things—or, rather, the chaos before things began—was called by the uncouth name, Ginunga-Gap.

§ 13. THE COSMIC GIANT YMER.

Before the world was made, and as the first step to its making, the Northern cold and the Southern heat—meeting midway in Ginunga-Gap, and mixing with each other—gave birth, by a generative warmth, to the first of created beings.

This 'oldest inhabitant' was a mythic monster formed of melting ice and freezing mist—a combination of fiery sparks and falling hailstones.

This 'original settler' was called the Giant Ymer.

Not only was he the first-born of earthly creatures, but he ante-dated the earth itself: in fact, he ante-dated even the birth of the gods—or of all but the One Supreme God—the God who, according to this mythology (as according to the Holy Scriptures), was never 'born,' but whose existence is 'from everlasting to everlasting.'

The Jotun Ymer—the archetypal frost-giant—who is thus chronologically the earliest of the Norse mythical beings—was an insensate, formless mass of inert matter, as huge as a planet;

and he is to be regarded merely as a colossal symbol of cold and darkness; a featureless figure wrought by the poets into a semblance of life only to serve a cosmic purpose by his death.

His biography is curious.

As Jupiter was brought up on the milk of a goat, so Ymer was brought up on the milk of a cow.

§ 14. THE COW AUDHUMBLA.

The Cosmic Cow that fed the Giant Ymer was named Audhumbla—signifying a dark void.

Four great rivers ran from the cow's teats.

Her milk was generated of hoar-frost, which the cosmic beast licked from the 'rimestones'; or, in other words, from the chilly clay of the unformed earth.

At this point of the cosmogony, two divergent tales are told, of which the eclectic reader may take his choice.

One version is, that the giant Ymer, after growing to a massive maturity on the milk of the cosmic cow Audhumbla, yet having no giantess to bear him a son, laid his two ice-cold feet together, and thereby brought to birth the needed offspring to perpetuate his race.

'Foot with foot begat,' says the Edda; and the thing begotten of Ymer's feet was a 'six-headed giant,' from whom all the subsequent evil-minded race of the frost-giants sprang.

But now an incident occurs that modifies this ill-derived ancestry by striking into it, for its ennoblement, a strain of blue and better blood.

Immediately after the birth of the 'six-headed giant,' two children (a male and a female) were born from under one of Ymer's arm-pits; and these two big babes became the progenitors of a second and better race of giants; these superior giants becoming, in their turn, the earthly forbears of the Gods of Heaven.

Such is the first version.

The second form of the tale—a form which the reader may prefer as a substitute for the rendering already given—is, that though the inferior giants sprang from Ymer's feet, yet the superior did not spring from Ymer's arm-pits, but had a mystical origin as follows:—

§ 15. THE BIRTH OF THE GODS.

One day, while the cow Audhumbla was licking the frost from the clay-stones, the warmth of her tongue proved to possess a creative energy, and brought to life, first the head, then the limbs, and then the complete form, of a good giant named Buri.

This giant was fair of face, kind of heart, and bright of wit.

He had an intelligent son called Bor, who, being half human and half divine, had the happiness to find for himself (though *where* is not told) a fit love-mate in the person of a beautiful giantess called

Bestla, by whom he became the father of Odin, Hœnir, and Loki, the three original Gods of Heaven.

However different these two tales may appear, they both teach one and the same thing, namely, that though the first-created beings were the frost-giants, yet even the gods themselves, instead of having a heavenly origin, sprang from these grovelling frost-giants (or Jotuns), and were therefore base-born.

Hence it will be seen, throughout the whole course of this mythology, that the gods were always subject to the inexorable law of their own heredity, and that as they sprang, not from gods like themselves, but from a low and ignoble race of beings called Jotuns, so therefore the nature of the Norse gods was destined never to get rid of the taint of evil which those imperfect deities inherited through their ignoble birth.

§ 16. THE CREATION OF THE EARTH.

Our Arctic Bible now proceeds naively with the legend that tells us how this world of ours was made.

As the Norse myths are mostly of a colossal and stupendous type, so there is no lack of the marvellous in the present case.

With fine simplicity, the elder Edda, in speaking of Ginunga-Gap, says :—

‘In the days of old, in the place where Ymer dwelt, there was no sand, no rolling wave, no earth, no heaven, no sprig of green, nothing but a yawning gap.’

Then, in the midst of the scene thus described, or, in other words, in the centre of the blank void of Ginunga-Gap, or Chaos, the three gods, Odin, Hœnir, and Loki, suddenly appear.

Finn Magnusson thought that their three names signify Air, Light, and Fire.

Their errand is to make a world ; and they make it at once, in a weird way. They slay the giant Ymer, cut his carcass to pieces, and form of the fragments the different parts of the earth’s framework, as follows :—

Of his bones they make the mountains—of his skull, the sky—of his hair and beard, the forests—of his teeth, the rocks—of his chill and watery blood, the ocean—and of his foggy brain, the thick clouds.

The ancient Frisians (as Prof. Skeat has pointed out) had a similar legend, according to which Adam was created of eight elements, namely, his bones, of rock—his flesh, of clay—his blood, of water—his heart, of air—his thoughts, of clouds—his sweat, of dew—his beard, of grass—his eyes, of sun and moon—and his breath, of the Spirit of God.

The Chaldeans had a legend somewhat similar : their cosmic giantess named Omorca was cut in twain, one half her body becoming the earth, and the other half the heavens, while man sprang as an intelligent being from her head—as Minerva sprang from the head of Jove.

§ 17. THE FIRST HUMAN PAIR.

Having created the earth out of Ymer's body, the three original Norse gods (Odin, Hœnir, and Loki) next created a Man and a Woman—the first human pair.

The story runs thus :—

Walking one day by the sea-side, the triple authors of the newly-created earth discovered that the green and beautiful realm which they had called into existence was without a sign of human life.

Whereupon the three creative divinities, coming to a couple of young trees—one an Ash, and the other an Elm—breathed into these green growths a more vital spirit than the mere sap of vegetable life: whereby the Ash became a man, and the Elm a woman: and hence the Adam and Eve of this mythology are Ask and Embla, or Ash and Elm.

§ 18. THE DELUGE.

I have mentioned two different forms of the story of the giant Ymer: there is still a third version, but it is hardly Norse, for it is manifestly borrowed from the scriptural narrative of Noah's Ark.

According to this third (or semi-Mosaic) rendering, after the three gods (Odin, Hœnir, and Loki) slew the cosmic Ymer, the giant's thin blood proved to be not only profuse enough to constitute the ocean; but, furthermore, the ocean, after being thus created of Ymer's watery ichor, rose in the course of time to such a height that all the frost-giants (or, in other words, all Ymer's descendants) were drowned, except one alone, who saved himself in a fishing-boat.

This Norse Noah became (according to the third form of the legend) the progenitor, not merely of a new race of giants, but also of a new race of mankind.

The reader will here recall the corresponding Greek myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha: how these two personages were the sole survivors of a similar flood, how the twain landed on the top of Mount Parnassus, and how they became the parents of a re-peopled world.

The Mosaic account of the origin of Adam (Gen. ii. 7) runs thus: 'There went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.'

In the Persian myth of the world's primal couple—Meshia and Meshiane—they sprang (as in the Norseland) from *two trees*.

§ 19. A MIXTURE OF MONOTHEISM AND POLYTHEISM.

Just here I may consider a question which is sure to arise; namely, how could the ancient Norse religion have been, at one and the same time, both monotheistic and polytheistic?

This inquiry will be interesting.

In one of the oldest of the Norse poems a prophetess has a

vision not unlike that of St. John in the Isle of Patmos: she sees, if not a holy city, yet a shining hall, not the Valhal of Odin and of his fellow-gods, but the Palace of Gimli or of the One Supreme God: she sees also not merely an Asgard which is to be destroyed at the end of the world, but an eternal kingdom wherein (as she says):—

‘The omnipotent One, who ruleth over all, shall hold a great judgement, shall pronounce dooms, shall establish holy peace, and shall give to the righteous eternal bliss.’

So say the antique verses called the Voluspa, or the Vala’s prophecy; and if such a citation were fairly characteristic of the general tone of the whole Eddaic mythology, the reader would say, ‘This mythology is a pure and simple monotheism.’

But such monotheistic touches in the Eddas are few—so few indeed as to give rise to the suspicion that such passages are interpolations.

Even if deemed genuine, and accounted for as due to the powerful influence of the Christian scriptures, nevertheless the few monotheistic references in the Eddas do not prevent the Eddaic paganism from being almost as absolutely polytheistic as is the mythology of Greece and Rome.

In fact, the One Supreme God of Gimli, after having once ‘sent the heat,’ disappears for an untold time from the Norse myths: nor will He again figure in them until after the final destruction of the world; when He shall gloriously return to create (somewhat according to the Biblical pattern) ‘a new heaven and a new earth.’

Meanwhile, the One Supreme God has no continuous function in this polytheistic mythology; but, on the contrary (if I may borrow a figure of speech from the theatre), I may say that He appears in the Prologue, and He reappears in the Epilogue, but He is meanwhile persistently absent from the Drama itself.

Indeed, throughout the whole period of the dramatic action—a period covering all that we call Time and Nature, Earth and Man. History and Destiny—though the Eddas do not forget the One Supreme God, yet they almost totally replace Him by a company of lesser gods, twelve in number; with goddesses not fewer than twenty-five or thirty; together with giants, dwarfs, vans, elves, and other supernatural figures—some of them of monstrous size (such as a serpent that encircles the earth, and a wolf that swallows the sun)—in brief, an elaborate system of symbols personifying all the chief operations of Nature, both lurid and lovely, and including every weird fancy which can be deduced from the contrasts of summer and winter, of good and evil, or of life and death.

I repeat that only in the Prologue and in the Epilogue, and not at all in the Drama itself, does this polytheistic masquerade ever deviate into a monotheistic key or tone.

Now though the twelve Norse gods, with Odin at their head, and with Asgard for their seat, are portrayed in the Eddas as not

a whit less divine than the Greek Jove and his Olympian band; yet Odin and his company, celestial though they be, have no affinity with the One Supreme God of their own mythology. They do not include Him in their hierarchy; nor do they once engage His co-operation, nor stand in awe of His sovereignty, nor seem aware of His reign. He never acts *with* them, nor *for* them, nor *against* them; for into their synod He never enters; nor does He on any occasion marshal their hosts to battle, nor issue a decree, nor thwart a machination, nor work a miracle, nor speak a word, nor prove by any sign or token either that He rules, or even that He exists.

Moreover, although He certainly *does* exist in the Norse mythology—for He is its Alpha and Omega, its beginning and end—yet He is not a recognizable person, but only an abstraction. He bears no royal title nor honorary designation; in fact, He has no name whatever; for He is the power whom the prophetess confesses that '*she dares not name*'; and accordingly she alludes to Him only in a roundabout way as 'He who sends the heat,' or as 'He who comes to the judgement.'

On the other hand, in strong contrast with this vague impersonality of the One Supreme God is the marked individuality of each of the lesser gods; who—all the twelve, even including Odin himself—can be recognizably represented and unmistakably identified; for instance, by a physical infirmity, or by a favourite weapon, or by a characteristic accompaniment in the form of certain coupled animals, such as a pair of ravens, or of cats, or of goats.

But if I thus emphasize the fact that this old pagan religion exhibits what (to a Christian mind) may seem an impossible jumbling together of monotheism and polytheism; or, in other words, an intermingling of self-contradictory elements such as cannot logically unite, I must, on the other hand, not forget to point out an all-reconciling principle which renders their mutual oppugnance more apparent than real, and which in fact converts their supposed *mésalliance* into a harmonious union both natural and necessary.

To make the point clear, let us for a moment contrast the mythology of Greece with the religion of the Bible; or (more particularly) let us compare the pagan Zeus of Mount Olympus with the Christian Jehovah of the Apocalypse.

Each of these deities is set forth as the One Supreme Ruler of the universe; each is described as omnipotent and immortal; so of course these two Supreme Powers—Jehovah on the one hand, and Jupiter on the other, one Christian and the other pagan—cannot without logical absurdity be both introduced into one and the same system; for though there could be a place in it for *one* of them, yet there could be no place for *both*.

Even the realm of myth—which is the world of fancy—must be governed to a certain degree by logic and reason. No mythology

may too outrageously set at naught the common facts of nature, nor defy the normal processes of the intellect; otherwise an emblem or figure or allegory, by lack of rational consistency, or of metaphorical aptitude, would cease to appeal to the minds of reasonable men, and would convey no moral meaning at all.

Hence (I repeat) the scriptural Jehovah and the Homeric Zeus cannot both exist in the same religion; each excludes the other; for the attempt to put two such all-supreme powers side by side in a creed which men, as rational beings, are expected to credit, would be a *non sequitur*—an *argumentum ad absurdum*.

But there is no such affront to reason in the Norse medley of monotheism and polytheism; for the Norse gods—even the fatherly Odin and the thunderous Thor—claim no omnipotence, no omniscience, and no immortality.

Whether as All-father or as Val-father—that is, whether as ‘father of all’ or as ‘father of the slain’—Odin, under any name, is a god of limited and temporary godhead: for instead of being omniscient, he needs to go to the Fount of Wisdom for instruction; instead of being omnipotent, he is to be utterly overthrown at Ragnârök (or Doomsday); and instead of being immortal, he is predestined to die crushed between the jaws of the Fenris-wolf. And there is no trace or hint in the Eddas that Odin after death will have a resurrection; but, on the contrary, when this greatest of all the twelve gods is once dead, he is to remain dead for ever.

Odin, therefore, as the chief deity in the Norse polytheism, is in no sense a rival of the One Supreme God of the Norse monotheism.

In fact, to simplify the discussion, and to remove whatever incongruity may be implied in a mythology made up of monotheism and polytheism, I may say that (strictly speaking) the Norse gods are not gods at all, but only supernal heroes; and, for illustration, I may add that the difference of divineness between Odin (the chief of the gods) and Sigurd (the chief of the heroes) is a difference, not in kind, but only in degree; for the god Odin is but little more than a hero, and the hero Sigurd is but little less than a god.

Moreover, a system of divinities who have but limited powers, but finite intelligence, and but temporary duration of life—gods who go galloping with a foredoomed precipitancy to an inevitable downfall and death—such a scheme of religion seems to require, for its logical coherence, some kind of an over-ruling and immortal Sovereign who shall be as far superior to all demi-gods, and to all supernal heroes, as He is to all mankind, and who, furthermore, shall be predestined (either by Himself or by the Norns) to survive the Day of Doom.

§ 20. A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE GREEK AND THE NORSE MYTHOLOGY.

The Greek and Roman myths, classic though they are, and supreme among the products of the human fancy, yet do not

develop a connected drama or system; for though each Jovian myth or fable, taken by itself, illustrates some phenomenon of Nature, or some phase of human life, yet the Olympian mythology, viewed as a whole, has no continuous story to tell, and no final climax to reach.

Not so with the Norse system; for this has a logical coherence, a manifest and inevitable drift, a pre-arranged gravitation to a dramatic close: and this terrible *finale* is nothing less than the destruction of the present Earth, and the substitution of a regenerated planet, together with a new order of Mankind.

§ 21. THE NINE WORLDS.

Instead of Earth, Heaven, and Hell (the three worlds of the Bible), the Norsemen had nine: three of which were *above* the earth, three *on* it, and three *under* it.

Taking the earth as a centre, the distribution of the nine Norse worlds was as follows:

Above the earth were—

1. *Muspelheim*,
2. *Asaheim*,
3. *Los-Alfheim*;

On the earth were—

4. *Vanaheim*,
5. *Mannaheim*,
6. *Jotunheim*;

Under the earth were—

7. *Swart-Alfheim*,
8. *Helheim*,
9. *Niffleheim*.

A brief explanation of these nine worlds will now be given *seriatim*.

1. MUSPELHEIM, or the world of Fire.

This is the fabled realm from which the fire-giants are to come at Doomsday (or Ragnârok), when the present world is to perish in a universal conflagration, preparatory to the establishment of a new universe on a nobler pattern.

The fire-giants who are to burn the earth are called 'the Sons of Muspel.' This is a poetic title, of which the etymology is doubtful; but perhaps the word *Muspeli* is the same as *Mundspili*, and means 'world-destroyers.' Their leader is Surt, whose name signifies swart or black (like a charred coal).

The fires of Muspel, though they are not to fulfil their chief function till the world's end, nevertheless played no small part at the world's beginning; for they ante-dated the solar heat. It was from the Muspel-fires that the sun was created; while, at the same cosmic epoch, the glittering sparks which the solar flames threw off into space, during the process of the sun's creation, were fixed in the heavens to constitute the stars.

But neither the earth, nor the sun, nor the stars (according to this mythology) can hope to abide in perpetuity. They have a term. Their term is known, and can be prophesied. The completion of this term of the world's duration is to be the great opportunity of the Sons of Muspel; for at Ragnârok (or the Day of Doom) Surt, the leader of the fire-giants, is to bring his army of world-destroyers to the Plain of Vigrid, where he will fight a dreadful battle with the gods of Valhal, whom he will overthrow; and he will then, at the moment of victory, set the universe on fire with Muspel-flames.

2. ASAHEIM, or the world of the Gods.

The old Norse word for a god is *As*, plural *Æsir*; but this plural is commonly anglicized into *Asas*.

A goddess is an *Asinia*.

The gods and goddesses—or the *Asas* and *Asinias*—dwell in *Asaheim*; but generally, instead of *Asaheim*, the heavenly world is called *Asgard*, which means 'the Garden of the Gods.'

The Scandinavian Chair at Oxford has lately introduced the letter *n* into all the above words, turning them from *As*, *Asinia*, *Asgard*, &c., into *Anse*, *Ansinia*, *Ansegard*, &c.; but popular usage (if popular it may be called) continues to retain *As* instead of *Anse*, *Asgard* instead of *Ansegard*, &c.

In this synopsis, therefore, we shall continue to follow the old and standard nomenclature.

Asgard is the Norse heaven, corresponding to the Greek *Olympus*, to the Persian *Alboorz*, and to the Indian *Meru*.

In the centre of *Asgard* is a meadow called *Idavold*, or the Plain of *Ida*, where, under a green tree (the greenest of trees) and by a pure fount (the purest of founts) the gods meet in daily council, to govern the world.

Moreover, in *Idavold*, the *Asas* have a pleasure-ground called *Glafir Grove*; and hence the term *Glafir Grove* is sometimes used as another name for the whole 'Garden of the Gods' (or all heaven itself).

Adjacent to *Glafir Grove* is the celebrated banqueting-hall called *Valhal*, or the 'Hall of the Slain,' where *Odin* and his fellow-gods give a daily feast to the *Einheriar* (or heroes who have been slain on earth in battle).

The *Asinias* (or goddesses) have in *Asgard* a reception-hall called *Vingolf*—with *Friga* (the Northern Juno) at its head.

Also, each god and goddess has in heaven a private residence; some of these palaces being noted for their special splendour; as, for instance, *Odin's villa*, which, like a crest, crowns the top of the sky, and is built of silver.

This pleasure-house of *Odin* is called *Lidskaf*, and is so situated that the Father of Mankind can stand in his celestial doorway and look down over the whole earth. And when *Odin* is said, in the Northern fairy tales, to 'peep from the window of heaven,' the

reference is to this lofty post of observation in the silver villa or palace of Lidskaf, which is situated at the apex of Asgard.

3. LOS-ALFHEIM, or the world of the White Elves.

There are white elves and black, each order having a separate world; one of these worlds being *above* ground, and the other *beneath*.

The white elves are half-heavenly sprites, dear to the gods, and gentle to mankind; the black are of the earth earthy, and though not wholly malevolent, like the frost-giants, yet are given to low cunning and tricky craft.

At the same time, it must be said—to the credit of the black elves—that their ingenuity in smith-work generally suffices to keep them usefully employed; and accordingly (like ‘children who have something to do’) they are thereby kept out of serious mischief.

The white elves (or fairies) live in the air, dance upon the meadows, and love the light; whilst their smut-faced cousins dig and delve in mines, work in caves with forge and anvil, and dwell out of the reach of a ray of sunshine.

There is also another class of elves, neither white nor black, but called ‘The Hill People,’ who are unhappy in their minds, feeling themselves guilty of sins against the Holy Ghost; and who sometimes pitifully implore the good Christian peasants to point out to them the way of salvation. Credulous farmers and milk-maids, on still summer nights, will press their hands up behind their ears and will fancy that they can thus catch the faint and far-off sounds of the hill people singing plaintive hymns in the woods, or saying musical prayers for forgiveness.

Norse fiddlers are dexterous in giving illustrations of this minor-keyed melody on their ‘kits’ or violins.

Ole Bull (the famous Norwegian violinist) had a pet fiddle which was too small for him to use in public, and which he kept in his bed-chamber, by the side of his bed, within reach of his hand; and when he was restless and unable to sleep, he would pick up this tiny ‘kit,’ lay it across his breast, and soothe himself to drowsiness by improvising the faint elf-music of his native hills. [This anecdote was told me in his own house, at Madison, Wisconsin, by a member of his family.]

The elves are of far Eastern origin, and may claim to be the most Oriental of mythic creatures.

For instance, in Japan, in the palmy days of the old Sinto faith (which has, to a great degree, been subverted in that country by modern ideas), it was held that a numberless multitude of spirits or genii or fairies were the animating powers of Nature, governing the sun, moon, winds, waters, buds, bees, &c., &c.; for the universe (to the Japanese mind) was a great Fairyland or Alfheim, wherein all natural phenomena, and all human events, were the work of

good or bad elves. And perhaps the modern Japs had some unseen help from these potent sprites at the recent naval battle of Yalu !

4. VANAHEIM, or the world of the Vans.

The vans are water-divinities.

Strictly speaking, they lack the rank of godhead, yet they are often styled gods.

The realm of the vans is partly the fresh-water streams, and partly the salt sea ; not the mid-ocean, but rather the fiords, the skerry-channels, and especially the ship-frequented waters of the coasting trade.

The vans are therefore looked up to as the guardians of sailors, pilots, and fishermen ; and are thought by seafaring folk to give fair winds and fine weather.

The chief of the vans—the illustrious head of all their tribe—was Niord, who may be called the Norse Neptune.

Once on a time, the Garden of the Gods (or Asgard) was rudely broken in upon by the boisterous vans.

In other words, the sea rose in riot against the sky.

The quarrel grew so rife with mutual jealousy and bickering that finally—lest one party should destroy the other—a treaty of peace and amity was made between the angry contestants.

In order that this treaty might be strictly carried out, each party gave to the other a hostage.

These two hostages were notable personages : the gods giving to the vans no less a deity than Hœnir, who was one of the three joint-creators of mankind ; the vans giving to the gods, in exchange, the great chieftain of the water-world, the noble-minded Niord, who, after his transfer to Asgard, became almost as veritable a divinity as if he had been born a god.

A pretty story is here to be told.

As soon as Niord, in his new character as a hostage, had been admitted to dwell in heaven, there came one day before the council of the gods—demanding a judicial hearing—a giant's daughter, who complained that her father had been wantonly put to death on earth by the disorderly vans.

The accusing damsel had great beauty, which was set off to fine advantage by her Amazonian dress ; for she was clad in armour like a valkyrie (or war-angel), and it was with her spear in her hand, and with her shield on her arm, that she demanded the customary reparation known in Norseland as 'the blood fine.'

The gods in council could not dispute her claim ; for by the Norse religion every murder had necessarily one of two consequences—either revenge, or else a money compensation.

The damsel's name was Skadi ; and though she was the daughter of one of the worst of the frost-giants (her father being the giant Thiassi, who stole the apples of the gods), yet the bonnie maiden seemed so much better than her bad birth, that the gods were loth

to send her back to her low and frosty world; so they decreed that in lieu of a mere 'blood fine' (or money compensation), she should be honoured with the high privilege of marrying one of their heavenly band, and of living afterwards in Asgard—a goddess in rank.

The question was, Which of the twelve gods should she marry?

She was to choose for herself on one condition; a condition somewhat grotesque; for she must make her choice among the dozen deities by looking, not at their faces, but at their feet!

Accordingly the twelve gods threw their cloaks over their heads and stood before Skadi, all hiding their faces, and showing only their feet!

(What a subject for a picture by Puvis de Chevannes!)

Now Skadi, who as a giantess in Jotunheim had heard of the great fame of 'Balder the Beautiful'—the most glorious of the gods—was so struck with admiration at a pair of translucent feet, that she thought, 'Surely these can belong to no other god than to Balder himself!'

Nevertheless, Skadi made a wrong guess; for the shining feet proved to be, not those of Balder, the summer-god, but of Niord the water-god, and had caught their aquatic translucence from the clear depths of the Norwegian fiords.

The disappointed Skadi, however, had no occasion, in the sequel, to repent her marriage with the fine-footed van; for her heaven-dwelling husband was more than a mere van; he was a god by brevet; and he made Skadi the proud mother of a daughter more beautiful than herself—a daughter born in Asgard, and who grew up to fulfil a great history; for she was the goddess Freyia, or the Norse Venus.

The same marriage was also blest by the birth of a son—Frey—one of the most renowned figures in this mythology; a god who, especially in Sweden, was for centuries looked up to as a power superior even to Odin.

'I swear by the great god Frey!' was the customary form of a Swedish oath; an oath showing the supreme influence of the water-world and its mystical forces over the minds of the Norsemen, especially throughout the Viking age.

5. MANNAHEIM, or the world of Men.

It was also called Midgard (or middle-garden or burg), a half-way house between heaven and hell.

Mannaheim was not the earth as a globe or sphere, nor as a planet or heavenly body, but only as a terrestrial plain, the abode of mankind.

Mannaheim or Midgard contained, or was contained by, the ocean—the great salt sea—which, in girdling the world with water, was symbolized by a cosmic snake named Yormungand, that lay

at the bottom of the great deep ; a sea-serpent so huge that it coiled itself round the whole earth.

This monster was one of the three fabulous miscreants whom the hag Angerboda bore to Loki (or the Devil) — the three monsters being, first, the Fenris-wolf ; second, Hela (or the Hell-witch) ; and third, the Midgard-serpent.

They were distributed in three distant and opposite parts of the universe—for the Fenris-wolf dwelt in Asgard ; Hela, in Helheim ; and the Midgard-serpent, in Mannaheim.

Once after a harvest-frolic, the great god Thor the Thunderer, being in a blustering humour, said to the giant Hymer, ' Row me in your boat out to sea, I want to fish for the Midgard-serpent ; and if I catch him, I will rid the world of him.'

Hymer obeyed reluctantly, for the enterprise seemed to him dangerous.

Thor baited his hook with the head of an ox.

The sea-serpent bit at the tempting morsel, and was hooked. Thor dragged up the monster's head to a level with the boat's gunwale, and began to crush the venomous creature with the hammer Mjolner ; but Hymer, who was frightened at the terrible splashing which the furious serpent now caused, and which threatened to swamp the boat, slyly cut the line, and let the monster escape.

The Midgard-serpent has ever since been safe in his hiding-place, which is at the bottom of the sea ; a depth from which he will arise at Ragnârok (or Doomsday), when he will meet his death in a final duel with his same great antagonist Thor.

But this duel will be an encounter in which Thor also shall perish, poisoned by the venom of the cosmic snake.

6. JOTUNHEIM, or the world of the Frost-giants.

This cold region lies contiguous both to earth and to heaven, and is therefore a source of perpetual peril both to men and to gods.

In fact, the hard-hearted, sullen, and threatening frost-giants, who never know what it is to be warm and comfortable in their ice-caverns, are always meditating a desperate rush from their chilly realm of Jotunheim upward into the green earth, and thence along the arc of the rainbow into heaven.

Their attacks upon mankind are comparatively easy to execute ; for Jotunheim (or giant-land) is a part of the terrestrial world—simply a cold corner of the earth ; but to break into the Garden of the Gods is what the giants find to be a hard task ; all the harder inasmuch as Jotunheim is separated from Asgard by a deep torrent called the Ifing River, a rapid stream that never freezes ; and hence (as it furnishes to the giants no ice-bridge for a safe crossing) their only possible passage from Jotunheim to Asgard is by way of Heimdal's arc, called Bifrost (which is the rainbow).

The pagan Norsemen seem to have known by instinct that 'the kingdom of heaven is taken by violence, and the violent take it by force.'

The joint defence of Mannaheim and Asgard (or of earth and heaven) against the attacks of the terrible frost-giants is confided as a ceaseless care to the god Thor the Thunderer.

A doughtier champion was never chosen !

Thor fighting the Frost-giants !—this is the one chief and favourite fancy of the whole Norse mythology ; and this magnificent myth is as much alive to-day in the popular literature of the North as it was in mediaeval times.

Thor, in his warfare against the frost-giants, uses a unique weapon ; for he fights, not like a soldier, with a sword, but like a blacksmith, with a hammer.

Be it known, however, O curious reader ! that this strange hammer, this mystical mauler, this magical thumper and pounder, this rattling crusher of giants, is no common, heavy, inanimate sledge or bludgeon such as depends for its effectiveness upon its weight, or upon the brute force of its wielder. For, on the contrary, this heavenly hammer is airy and volatile ; it is a thing of intelligence ; it has the gift of magic ; it outdoes all common tricks of enchantment ; it never misses its mark ; it works the will of its master as if his weapon were one of his own winged and flying thoughts, rather than a mere tangible instrument in his grasp ; it always comes back to his right hand of its own accord the instant after he has thrown it at the giants, and he may instantly throw it at them agen and agen. So that Thor's hammer renders him, if not quite omnipotent over the frost-fiends, yet always to be dreaded by them as their certain conqueror and perpetual scourge.

Thor's mighty mallet, which breaks the ice of all the North, is called *Mjolner* (or the crusher), and its power to split and rend and rive whatever the weapon is aimed at suggests Jupiter's thunderbolt.

But Jotunheim (or giant-land), though a region of ice and desolation, is nevertheless not wholly inhabited by the worst class of Jotuns—needing to be crushed or restrained.

The student of these mythic symbols will not forget that though the cosmic Jotun Ymer, the progenitor of the frost-giants, was a mere insensate creature (representing the unendurable cold of the North), yet the frosty region of Jotunheim is not without its giants of a humane type.

The gods themselves are not all good—witness Loki, who is the genius of sin ; nor are the giants all evil—witness Meimer, who is the genius of wisdom.

Accordingly, as every good thing has evil in it, and as every evil thing has good in it, so this mythology has located Jotunheim in close proximity to Asgard on the one hand, and to Midgard on the other ; thus furnishing a majestic emblem of the whole moral

world : a world of struggle and conflict : a world of clashing aims and interests : a world wherein Wrong and Injustice are left free to work mischief, while Truth and Right are also left free to combat Error and Evil.

7. SWART-ALFHEIM, or the world of Black Elves.

These, as already stated, are the inferior elves who live underground, where they work as miners, smelters, gold-beaters, and treasure-hiders.

They possess chests of money which they have coined, jewels which they have polished, and talismans which they have endowed with magic.

The handicraft of the black elves, with their untinkling and noiseless hammers and anvils, is not only beyond all the subtlety of human wit and cunning, but exceeds the united sagacity of all the gods. For among the Norse gods there is no supreme and divine smith or mechanic like the Greek Hephaestion, whom the Latins called Vulcan, and who made the invisible net which entrapped Venus and Mars.

The Norsemen have indeed a clever blacksmith, named Weyland (or Volund), who has superhuman skill as an iron-worker ; but he is not the equal of Vulcan ; for Volund is not a god. And yet the Norsemen have a multitude of little Vulcans in the black dwarfs, every one of whom is a smutty Hephaestion in epitome.

The skill of these pigmies or gnomes is so unquestioned and so versatile, that whenever the gods, in some great emergency, need some miraculous contrivance to be devised for them—say, for instance, a spear of infallible aim, or a sword of infrangible edge, or a ship that will not fail to have a fair wind—they always order the talisman to be made by the swart elves.

The two worlds of elves, to wit, Los-Alfheim and Swart-Alfheim, are commonly spoken of as one ; and the general term, including both realms, is Alfheim, or elf-world.

The tutelary deity of Alfheim, or of all the elves, is Frey ; who was made the suzerain of the combined elf-worlds while he was yet a child. For he was such a beautiful baby, so like a white elf himself, that he was a welcome and petted darling of the gods ; and before he was out of his cradle they gave him all elf-land for a 'tooth-gift.'

Ever since then the domain of Alfheim (or the fairy world) has been the inalienable heritage of all children of Gothic lineage. For though, in mediaeval times, St. Olaf (the Christian King of Norway) banished from his realm the gods, the giants, and the elves ; and though the gods and the giants have stayed away from Norseland ever since, or at least are now but little regarded there ; yet the elves still flourish in all the North in spite of St. Olaf's decree ; and hence it happens that all Scandinavian children, like all their cousins in England and America, can still hear

'The horns of Elfland faintly blowing.'

8. **HELHEIM**, or Hell ; the infernal world—and yet not the abode of the wicked, but of the dead.

The English word Hell (spelt with two l's) gives an incorrect notion of the ancient Norse word Hel (spelt with one).

Hel (or Hela) in this mythology means, not a place, but a person ; just as the name Hadés, in the Greek tongue, stands either for the place called Hell, or for the person called Pluto.

The poetic substitution of a person for a place recalls Milton's celebrated 'Chaos,' a living creature whom the poet makes one of his *dramatis personae*, thus :—

' A dark
Illimitable ocean without bound,
Without dimension, where length, breadth, and height,
And time and place are lost ; *where eldest Night*
And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold
Eternal anarchy. . . *Chaos umpire sits,*
And by decision more embroils the fray
By which he reigns.' (P. L. ii. 891, &c.)

The Eddaic bards style Hela (or Hel) sometimes a goddess, sometimes a giantess, and sometimes an ogress ; but under whatever title she is portrayed she is always a monster. For her father is Loki (or Satan) and her mother is the same horrid hag Angerboda, who bore to Loki his two other monstrous brats ; namely, the Midgard-serpent and the Fenris-wolf.

With keen-eyed vigilance, Hela, the devil's only daughter, sits at Hell-gate ; where she keeps a constant watch with the help of a hell-hound named Garm, the fiercest of all dogs—a chained monster who is to be loosed at Doomsday to attack the gods.

Nobody can pass in or out through Hela's gate without Hela's knowledge and permission. Many enter, few return ; whom she gets, she keeps. Chilly is her realm, without a spark of hell's traditionary flame ; and the infernal place is so capacious as to yield room enough for all who have died, and for all who are yet to die.

All the dead go to Hela, with few exceptions.

The exceptions are of two classes ; and consist, first, of *slain warriors* whose departing souls, instead of passing from the battlefield down to Hell, are conveyed by Valkyries up to Heaven to carouse with Odin in his palace of Valhal ; the second class consists of *criminals and infamous persons* who, at their death, are forbidden on account of their wicked lives to join the general host of all the dead in Hela's realm, but are consigned instead to the cave of the serpent Nidhug, to be venomously tortured in an atmosphere of inconceivable and perpetual cold.

And hence the last and lowest world on our mythical list is—

9. **NIFFLEHEIM**, or the place of 'outer darkness'—the dolefullest region into which a human spirit can be doomed to descend.

But before we describe it as a place of punishment, let us first mention that this weird Tartaros has suggested some curious cosmogonic fancies to the old skalds.

For instance, the chill vapours of Nifflheim, on growing thick and heavy, fall with a drizzle into a fountain called Vergelmer (or 'the Old Kettle').

From this copious caldron, the newly-condensed waters, as fast as they fill it, keep flowing forth in the form of twelve perpetual rivers called Elivagar (or ice-cold streams).

This antique and artistic image is the same which is everywhere seen in the public gardens of Europe to this day: as witness the familiar sculptures of symbolic rivers proceeding from vases and urns.

Furthermore, as every mythic fountain must be in charge of a *genius loci*, so 'the Old Kettle' has a fit guardian in the serpent Nidhug—a monster whose breath so taints the twelve ice-cold rivers with venom, that always in the Arctic regions the bite of frost seems to the popular fancy, not only a sting, but a poison.

Accordingly, it is to Nifflheim—to the ninth and darkest world—and to the serpent Nidhug's tooth (which exceeds the sharpness of every other fabled fang)—it is to this ninth and worst of worlds and of woes that such of the dead as have died too guilty to be worthy of hell are sent and kept, to be perpetually gnawed by this 'worm that dieth not.'

Nifflheim is therefore, by a ghastly metaphor, sometimes termed 'Nastrand' (or the coast of corpses).

Souls that are consigned for punishment to Nastrand remain there in perpetuity, unforgiven and tormented, retaining always their original identity, recognizing one another in that dread region by their resemblance to their former bodies, and writhing with a sort of semi-physical torture under the serpent's worse than fatal bite.

This is a myth which takes its distinguishing character from the keenness of the northern winter. For in southern countries, where men habitually suffer from heat instead of cold, the human fancy punishes the condemned sinner with an endless future of blazing fire; but in the North, where man's most dreaded enemy is a thermometer at 40 degrees below zero, the bards, in inventing an endless punishment, consign the souls of the wicked to an eternity of frost.

As all mythologies are more or less akin, owing to the general affinity of the whole human race, so this particular Norse myth of Nifflheim does not differ essentially from its evident prototype in the Greek Tartaros; and in fact the very word Nifflheim (or the realm of mist) finds its origin in the Greek word *Nephelê* (a fog or cloud).

The Greek idea of Charon and his boat, and of his ferrying the spirits of the dead to the Plutonian shore, might have seemed

worth borrowing by the Norsemen, who were fond of ships and of the sea. But the Greek mythology never had any strong influence on the Norse mind. The passage from earth to hell, in the Norse view, was not by a ferry-boat: it was by a land journey.

Thus when a Goth had just died, his family and friends, as their last act of kindness to him, after closing his eyes, put on his feet what were called his 'hell-shoes.'

For it was as a pilgrim shod with sandals that the dead Norseman was to make his lonely pilgrimage from the world of living men on earth to the world of shades below.

This mysterious journey had to be made on foot, except only in the rare case of some great king or queen—like Sigurd or Brunhilda—whose obsequies were of unusual splendour, and who, instead of being furnished with 'hell-shoes,' and expected to walk, were generously provided by the skalds with a chariot and horses, and who drove triumphantly down into the nether world.

But the Charonian idea of crossing a stream like the Styx in a boat seems to have been (to some extent) borrowed in the pageant of the burial of the god Balder; for his funeral-pyre was built upon a ship; and the blazing ship, with his sacred corpse burning in the midst of spiced and aromatic flames, was set adrift on the sea, and left to find its way downward to the realm of departed souls.

These Northern methods of sepulture, whether implying the use of 'hell-shoes,' or of a chariot and horses, or of a floating funeral-pyre, were not at all inconsistent with the Norse idea of Valhal and of the armed angels called Valkyries, whose mission was to bear the souls of dead heroes from earthly battlefields to Odin's heavenly palace. For, such blood-anointed souls, being Odin's chief favourites, were wafted not to hell but to heaven.

§ 22. THE TREE YGDRASIL.

We have now had a glimpse of each of the nine worlds into which the old Norse faith divided the framework of Nature.

Next in order, let me point out how the elder Edda unites these nine different realms into one connected and cosmic whole.

The device of unification is striking. But before I give it, I beg the casual reader (who perhaps little concerns himself with this old and musty lore) to bear in mind that this stately piece of world-building—with its nine orders of architecture—was fashioned at a primitive epoch when, to the mind of man, the earth seemed small; nor did even the heavens themselves seem great.

For to the eyes of the early skalds the stars were but burning sparks, not mighty orbs; the earth's rotundity was unsuspected; the moon was but as a lamp hung in the ceiling of a high hall; and the 'six planets' were but rushlights and will-o'-the-wisps, like the glimmering Jack-a-lanterns of a marsh.

Science had as yet done nothing to show the largeness of a universe which it has since expanded into an infinitude of space.

To the uninstructed pagans of the narrow North, who thought the earth to be a mere limited habitat for man and beast, there seemed nothing incongruous in symbolizing the whole scheme of the visible creation by a single tree.

Accordingly, with a daring freak of fancy, the skalds—to whom no idea was fascinating that was not stupendous—invented the myth or emblem known as the tree Ygdrasil; an Ash-tree so huge that it reached throughout the whole height, length, breadth, and depth of the universe.

This is not Eden's 'Tree of Life,' nor 'Tree of Knowledge'; for it bears no 'forbidden fruit'; in fact, it bears no fruit at all, save only woes and sorrows. And if it has any analogue in the Bible, the analogy points to the Holy Rood, or Tree of Calvary; for the god Odin hung upon the tree Ygdrasil as Jesus Christ hung upon the Cross.

The great Ash-tree Ygdrasil, which reaches either with its roots, or with its trunk, or with its branches, here to one of the nine worlds, and there to another, leaving none of the nine untouched, serves thus as a mystic emblem for interlinking the whole universe into a logical unity of plan.

The etymology is simple: Ygg is another name for Odin, and so Ygdrasil is Odin's tree.

This symbolic tree—this measureless and universal Ash—has three main roots, running out in opposite directions and extending to illimitable distances.

One of these three roots winds down into Helheim, or the 'Valley of the Shadow of death'; another wanders into Jotunheim, or the cold kingdom of the frost-giants; and the third is embedded in our own Midgard or Mannaheim, and thus interpenetrates the world of men.

Springing from these three main roots, the great tree has innumerable boughs and sprays, thrusting themselves everywhere throughout the universe, and towering up from the lowest depth of the cavernous earth to the highest height of the heaven of heavens.

The metaphor or symbol which the 'mundane tree' thus furnishes to the imagination is a very natural image to minds accustomed to mountainous countries, where every hunter or goat-herd is often struck by seeing, on some far-off hill-top, a solitary pine or cedar that stands against the sky with such monumental dignity as to seem fixed there for the sole purpose of interlinking the terrestrial with the celestial world, and of thereby typifying the oneness of earth and heaven.

Before I add some final particulars concerning the tree Ygdrasil, let me mention the Three Fountains (or magic springs) that water the great Ash—one at each of its three tap-roots.

§ 23. THE THREE FOUNTAINS.

I have already given the name of the first of these three mythic wells; namely, Vergelmer, or 'the Old Kettle,' a colossal caldron from which flow forth twelve ice-cold streams called Elivagar, chilling all the dark world of Niffleheim.

The second fount is in Jotunheim or giant-land, and is in the care and keeping of the wisest Jotun of his tribe, the giant Meimer or Mim; who, though he is only a giant (and therefore less than a god), is nevertheless able to instruct even the god Odin himself, especially in the art of war.

The third fount, and chief in rank of the three, is in Asgard, where it waters the Garden of the Gods.

The first and second of the three founts have each a solitary *genius loci* or keeper; but the third has three joint guardians; these being the three Norns (or Norse Fates); namely, Urd (or the Past), Verdandi (or the Present), and Skuld (or the Future).

The third fount takes its name from the eldest of these three Norns—Urd (or the Past)—and is called Urd's well, or the Urdar fount.

It is by the side of this holy well, and under the foliage of the tree Ygdrasil (whose branches overhang the Urdar fount in Asgard)—it is by the brink of this fount, and under the boughs of this tree, that the gods daily sit in council on the affairs of the nine Norse worlds.

Let us, for a few moments, re-visit each of these three founts in turn.

The first of the trio (the one known as Vergelmer) is metaphorically spoken of by the bards as being the origin of the whole earth's river-system; for, by a grotesque fancy, all the rivers of the earth were supposed by the Eddaic scheme of creation to take their joint rise in one and the same 'Old Kettle.'

The second fount (or Meimer's well) was the scene of a memorable adventure by the great god Odin, as follows:

One day Odin wanted a drink from Meimer's well. Meimer refused. Odin begged; but Meimer (though less than a god) still would not permit Odin (though the chief of the gods) to taste of the wisdom-giving waters without first paying to the giant a dear price for the precious privilege; and accordingly Odin had to pawn one of his eyes to Meimer as the cost of a drink.

This myth, however strange and uncanny, and however *un-Greeklike* in the physical deformity which it suggests, is nevertheless easily accounted for as a Norse fancy, in this way:

Odin is the sun; and since the sun (unlike the Gemini) is not a double star, so the sun's single orb did not seem to our pagan forefathers to be fitly represented as two globes; and hence Odin, as the sun's representative, could not have two eyeballs, but only one.

This mythology, therefore, deprived Odin of one of his eyes.

The manner of this deprivation had itself a meaning. The eye was not put out, it was *pawned*; the pawning was the price paid for the purchase of wisdom; so that wisdom is thus made to appear as a dear-bought and invaluable treasure, no less precious than 'the apple of the eye.'

But the myth, as a whole, is to be taken in a physical sense as a personification of the sun sinking into the sea.

The third fount (or the well of Urd) is the Gothic original from which Shakespeare borrowed the 'Three Weird Sisters' in *Macbeth*; and etymologically the Norse name Urd is exactly equivalent to the English word *Weird*.

Let us now turn back once more from the fountains to the tree.

In the Eddaic song entitled 'The Voluspa,' the prophetess says:

'I know a tall ash, a sacred tree by the name of Ygdrasil. It spreads its green boughs over the fount of Urd. The three Norns—the maidens who foredoom the destinies of men—daily sprinkle the tree with fresh pure water. The drops that drip from the leaves are the dews that fall into the dales.'

From another Eddaic song, 'The Lay of Grimner,' we learn that Ygdrasil, as a tree of sorrows, is afflicted with many troubles and pests, 'more indeed than any mortal dreams of.'

What therefore are the principal griefs which constitute the doleful fruitage of the tree Ygdrasil?

A few are the following:—

First. The serpent Nidhug, 'the most devouring of all worms,' gnaws continually at the Niffleheim root of Ygdrasil, while other serpents, Moin, Goin, and a whole legion of companion reptiles, join Nidhug (their chief) in the task of keeping this great and rotting root always in a more and more corrupt and poisoned state.

Second. Not only the root, but the trunk is likewise for ever rotting and wasting with natural decay, presenting a spectacle, not only of bloom, but of blight (just as the common mountain-ash on the Norska Fiellen is now seen to do).

Third. The branches of Ygdrasil suffer from strange enemies; for the mythic foliage of the cosmic ash is perpetually devoured by four colossal animals called Harts, who crop the high green shoots; browsing on them (as the Edda says) 'with arched necks' (suggesting giraffes).

Fourth. At the tree-top of Ygdrasil dwells a monstrous eagle, so huge that between his wide-spread eyes sits another bird of prey—a ferocious hawk. This eagle is called Egder; and this hawk, Habrok. These birds are the natural (and therefore the symbolic) enemies of the serpents at the root.

Fifth. To foment and intensify this natural enmity, and to prevent it from ever dying out, an evil genius, in the form of a squirrel named Ratatosk, runs up and down Ygdrasil as a perpetual message-bearer of mutual defiance and hate between the birds of prey on the one hand, and the serpents on the other; a singular

symbol, whereof the meaning is that Nature, in this present imperfect world, is in continual discord with itself, and will so remain until the end of the chapter; that is to say, down to the final conflagration at Ragnârok or Doomsday.

It is thus seen that the great Ash Ygdrasil is truly a Tree of Sorrows, for it looms up in this mythology as more prophetic of misery than the Mistletoe, and as more prolific of fatality than the Upas.

But at the same time, Ygdrasil is a gracious tree; and though in its leaves there is no 'healing for the nations,' yet under its boughs the beautiful rainbow is outspread; and the god Heimdal—the nine-mothered guardian of the seven-banded arc—can find no safer place wherein to keep his signal-trumpet hidden than among the invisible foliage of the great mundane Ash.

Heimdal's clarion (which the watchful 'guardian of heaven' thus keeps always within his easy reach, in order that he may seize it at a moment's notice) is the famous Giallerhorn; a wind-instrument which, like Gabriel's Trump, is to utter a world-shaking blast at the Day of Doom.

Meanwhile, until the dawning of that final day, the three Norns (or Fates) must daily sprinkle the great Ash from the Urdar Fount, to keep the tree alive, lest, by their neglect, it should die before its time, and involve the world in a premature annihilation.

Hence the question arises, What is at last to become of the tree Ygdrasil?

The final particulars are fully given in the elder Edda, and are in substance these:—

First. The mythic Ash, the mundane tree Ygdrasil—ever gnawed, ever rotting, ever cropt, ever sprinkled, and ever laden with calamity and woe—is to stand until the morning of Ragnârok or Doomsday.

Second. At the dawn of that 'dreadful day,' Heimdal is to draw forth from amid the mystic foliage of the mighty tree his hidden trumpet Giallerhorn; whereon he will blow a summons to Odin and the gods, and also to the Einheriar or heroes, summoning all the warlike occupants of Valhal to assemble on the Plain of Vigrid, armed and equipped for their predestined struggle against Surt and the fire-fiends.

Third. Just as the battle begins, the tree Ygdrasil will rustle, quiver, and groan; and just as the battle ends, and while the defeated and dying gods and heroes are at their last gasp, the tree is to be set aflame by the Muspel fire-fiends; and its scorched and shrivelled branches will then drop off, one by one, into the sea.

Thus shall perish Ygdrasil, the tree of trees; for though it is the most colossal growth in all Nature—larger than the world, larger indeed than heaven, earth, and hell, all put together (for it includes them all)—yet despite its size and vitality, and despite

the care which it receives from the three Norns, Ygdrasil is inwardly corrupt, and like all corrupt things must finally perish and come to nought.

§ 24. THE TWELVE GREAT GODS.

'Thou shalt have no other gods before me,' said Jehovah, in the Decalogue.

But the primitive Norsemen, long before they had heard of this command, had already provided themselves with a dozen different deities of the first rank.

In proceeding to name the twelve, I once more remind the reader that though the One Supreme God—Jehovah, Elohim, the Great I AM—is not to be catalogued among them, yet He must be tacitly assumed as existing *before* them all, and as destined to exist *after* them all.

The Norsemen, like their cousins, the Druids, had One Supreme God. Yet it is not with *Him* that the Norse mythology is occupied; for this mythology concerns itself exclusively with a conclave of *lesser* gods, all of whom were 'created,' none of whom were from 'everlasting,' and most of whom shall die at Doomsday.

The twelve gods of the Odinic system are Odin, Thor, Balder, Tyr, Bragi, Heimdal, Höder, Vidar, Vali, Uller, Forseti, and Loki.

The forementioned twelve gods will now be individually characterized, each in a brief biography, recording his personal adventures, his special functions, his divine labours and career, and his foredoomed downfall at Ragnârok.

1. ODIN—the chief of the Asas; the father (or else the grand-father) of two-thirds of all the gods of Asgard; the undisputed head and central figure of the Norse Pantheon.

He was one of the three joint-creators of the earth and of mankind.

He has ruled the world ever since he made it; and he will rule it till it is destroyed; but he will then perish with it; for he is not immortal—he is doomed to die.

We have already seen that Odin's tragic end will take place at Ragnârok (or the Day of Doom)—a fate which he foreknows, but which he cannot avert. Nor is his destruction to result from chance or accident, but, on the contrary, it is to be the inevitable consequence of his tainted heredity; for as he sprang from the frost-giants, he inherited from this rude race—in spite of his divinity—a sufficient element of earthliness (and therefore of evil) to predestine him to mortality, as if he were not a god but a man.

Odin's father and mother were Bor and Bestla.

Bor was not a god, nor was Bestla a goddess; for they were both Jotuns; and yet this theogonic pair, though they were of

Jotun stock, had three sons who, instead of being giants, were gods.

These three giant-born gods were Odin, Hœnir, and Loki; of whom Odin, as the eldest, was of course (by primogeniture) the chief.

Though Odin was thus of giant ancestry, and though he may almost be said (without too great a paradox) to have sprung from the very earth which he himself created; yet in order to show his so-called *spiritual* quality, he is made to do an act which (as some say) only a divine being—a veritable deity—could have accomplished; that is, he is described as having mysteriously procured—for gods and men—a secret beverage known as ‘the Soma drink’; a sacred liquor, sometimes ‘called Odrærer or the ‘wine of life,’ whereof a draught, to those who drink it, brings ‘divine inspiration.’

There are several different legends concerning the Soma drink; according to one of which the dwarfs brewed it, the frost-giants guarded it, and Odin stole it. But though Odin’s crafty stratagem in this theft is reckoned by certain commentators to be the chief and most godlike of his exploits, yet as this is a disputed and doubtful point—to which we must recur again—let us meanwhile dismiss it here.

An important feature in the Odinic symbolism should be at once set forth; namely, its later and Viking imagery; especially Valhal.

In the earlier ages of the Gothic religion, Odin was represented only or chiefly as the sun; and hence he was spoken of as having but one eye (for, as already narrated, he had pawned his other eye to Meimer for a draught from the Well of Wisdom).

But during the subsequent more warlike, or Viking, epoch of Odinism, the Norse bards gave to their war-god, Odin, a new function; calling him Val-father—a very striking title—which means ‘father of the slain’; thus constituting him in the Eddaic poetry the divine patron of the Einheriar, or earthly heroes fallen in battle.

Accordingly, Odin is at first the god of the *solar heat*; and he is then (though not till a succeeding age in European history) the god of the *slaughtered warrior*.

It is as the god, not of the *sun*, but of the *slain*, that Odin enthrones himself in his palace of Valhal; a palace which this mythology invented in the ninth century, for the sole and exclusive delectation of soldiers who expected (and desired) to be killed in battle; a palace which, except for the fight-loving Vikings, who thought it a shame to die otherwise than in combat, would have no place in the Eddaic poems.

The poets who wrote the Eddaic poems took chiefly the gods for their heroes; but when they took men instead, these heroic men were the Vikings, and the Vikings only; and even among the Vikings those alone were commemorated who were killed in fight.

Odin’s title of ‘Val-father,’ as a substitute for ‘All-father,’ was a

mark of the military passion of the Vikings. Their god was a god of battle. Their Valhal, or hall of the slain, was a banqueting-room, of which the ceiling was fretted with spears, the walls were hung with helmets, and the benches were decked with corselets.

No matter whether a Viking won or lost his fight, the essential thing with him was to die in battle.

His soul was then taken immediately to Valhal. But a mortal man who died in his bed was not thus wafted to heaven. On the contrary he was doomed to descend to hell.

The idea of Valhal must be regarded as a warlike episode introduced temporarily into the religion of the Norsemen during the Viking Age. It is an idea not hinted at in any of these myths before the ninth century. Valhal is a reflection of Mahomet's Paradise. The paganism of the Norsemen, like the Islamism of the Arabs, rewarded the gashed and bleeding soldier, at the moment of his death, by sending his happy soul straight from the battlefield to the Garden of the Gods, to feast with Odin and the Einheriar in the gay palace of Valhal.

The souls of all the other dead (even of kings and potentates) went to the solemn realm of Helheim; the souls only of slain heroes (I repeat) went to the banqueting-hall of Odin in Asgard.

Each Norse warrior, falling in battle, left his blood-stained body at once behind him, and arose from his pool of gore in the form of a wraith or film or vanishing spirit, borne upward by Valkyries, who, after thus transporting the Eipheriar (or heroes) to Odin's feast, waited upon them there as handmaidens at Odin's table.

But Valhal is more than merely Arabesque. Nor are the Odinic carousals chiefly Bacchanalian in their motive; for they constitute no idle, roystering, meaningless entertainment; their main object is quite other than wassail and prandial mirth. In fact, Odin—instead of a merry—has a serious, solemn, and awful purpose in thus gathering the departed heroes of all the northern lands into celestial barracks at Valhal.

His banqueting-palace is an armed camp; and the roystering of his warlike guests is simply an incidental appurtenance of camp life.

His one central purpose in the maintenance of Valhal is to enable him to muster an army of spiritual warriors; a mystic host which is growing in shadowy numbers year by year, age by age: an army of which he will have sore need when he shall finally be summoned to fight the great battle of Ragnârök—a battle which (as he foreknows) he is foredoomed to lose, yet which (like a true warrior) he means to wage the more fiercely from foreseeing that he is to fall.

This is true to human nature; for though mortals foreknow that life is limited in its measure of a man's days on earth, and that sooner or later every living man must die; yet, all the more, every man (despite this foreknowledge) struggles to live as long

as he can; and hence, 'to fight for one's life' becomes the last and highest effort of human courage and fortitude.

To fight bravely and to fall gloriously was thus the Viking religion; the only religion which gave the Norseman his hope of a future reward in heaven.

Odin, in Valhal, in order to keep his warriors in ever-continuous training for their coming contest with Surt, gives them meanwhile, every day till the end of the world, *a mock battle*; in which they slay and are slain; spearing and swording each other all the day long; after which, at evening, the killed all spring up into life again—unscarred and beautiful. And the whole great army of heaven at once reassemble—half in Valhal, and half in Folkvang—to carouse alternately with Odin and with Freyia preparatory to another bloody fight the next day.

Odin himself eats nothing, his only food being wine or (more strictly speaking) goat's milk, or mead, or hydromel; for the Garden of the Gods is too boreal for grapes.

But though Odin is no eater, yet he gives his guests a substantial meal!

It is a wild and savage feast!

One huge boar—an immortal *sanglier*—supplies all the flesh: for he is daily killed and eaten, and he daily revives, in order to be killed and eaten again. And thus, day by day, he will furnish forth the table of the gods and heroes until the Day of Doom.

This mythic boar is named Sæhrimner; and the bards of the Eddas smack their lips over him and call him 'the best of meat.'

Adepts in the arithmetic of sacred prophecies may calculate with some precision how great a host of heroes the Val-father is likely to lead forth from Valhal in the final clash at Doomsday; for the Eddas say that Valhal (which is the grandest of *casernes*) has five hundred and forty doors, and that from each door shall issue eight hundred combatants to engage in the battle at Ragnârok: showing that Odin's army at the Norse Armageddon will count about half a million spears.

Odin has many different names, among which are Bolverk, Ganglêree, Grimner, Harbard, Herian, Nikud, Ropt, Yalk, Tek, Ygg, and dozens of others; but in the old battle-days of the Vikings, Odin was most commonly spoken of as 'Val-father' (or father of the slain).

Odin has two wolves—Geri, the greedy; and Freki, the fierce.

He has two ravens—Munin, or Memory; and Hugin, or Reflection.

He has three wives:—

First, Jord; the *primal* earth as it was before the creation of man. (Her son is Thor the Thunderer.)

Second, Rind; the *habitable* earth as it appears during the snow-crusted season. (Her son is Vali, who, when only a day old, avenges Balder's death by slaying Höder.)

Third, Friga; the *summer-warmed* earth—teeming and fruitful. (Her son is 'Balder the Beautiful'.)

What is to be the closing scene in Odin's eventful history?

On the morning of Ragnârok, just before the outbreak of the battle, Odin will first go to the Well of Wisdom, and will there consult with Meimer as to the best plan of combat. For (be it noted again!) the Norse gods, without exception, are not omniscient, but are always needing counsel and advice.

After having been instructed by his oracle, Odin will next lead forth his half-million warriors against Surt and the hosts of Muspel.

It will be in fine array that the Val-father goes to his death. He will wear a golden helmet and a suit of bright-spangled armour. He will brandish his spear called Gungner, which never misses its mark.

He is no coward; and though he knows that he is to be defeated and overthrown, he never once flinches. He boldly meets the Fenris-wolf, engages the monster in mortal combat, and is not only conquered but devoured.

Thus, by the irony of fate, the 'Father of the Slain' will himself be slain, and he who has been heaven's chief purveyor of feasts will himself be swallowed as a mouthful.

A shred or remnant of this old Viking idea has lately been re-flaunted before the world in what is known as the revival of 'the Napoleonic legend'—a legend which owes its perennial interest far less to Napoleon's victories than to his defeats. A great historic career, in order to have an ideal ending, and especially in order to pass into a pathetic remembrance, must close in misfortune. What if Julius Caesar had not been assassinated! What if the heroic Nelson had not been mortally wounded! What if the oft-conquering Napoleon had not been finally overthrown! How incomplete, in each of these instances, the story would have remained! Lincoln's martyrdom is the aureole and coronation of his fame! If Washington, instead of dying in his bed, had been murdered at Mount Vernon, he would by this time have become a half-mythical character! And what would the New Testament be without its world-moving tale of the tragedy of Calvary?

The truth is, judging history and human events from a poetic or dramatic point of view, nothing succeeds so little as success.

Accordingly, the highest dramatic art is tragedy—the hero must suffer and die.

The Norse mythology foredooms nearly all its heroes to this fate. So that all its giants and all its gods, however victorious for awhile, are at last defeated and slain.

Are there then to be no final conquerors?

Yes, the fire-fiends may be called final conquerors. But nobody is to be interested in their victory. The interest is wholly and

exclusively in the perishing gods and heroes—in the burning earth and heaven.

All this tragic pathos is terribly vivid in the fascinating Odinic myths of the Val-father and his wrecked and ruined Valhal.

2. THOR THE THUNDERER.

He is Odin's first-born and chief son, the most energetic of all the gods—the real Jupiter of the North.

His mother was Jord. Thor, therefore, as the son of Odin and Jord, was born of the sun's heat and the earth's frost. He was the god of the thunder and the lightning; and, as such, he was the ideal deity of the old Norsemen; for they believed that were it not for Thor and his enchanted hammer, the frost-giants would win against the gods, and would seize and possess both the earth and the heavens.

Thor's hammer, therefore, was of itself almost a god, for it had divine intelligence.

Moreover, in addition to his hammer, Thor had other talismans; for instance, a pair of magic gauntlets, by which he kept his hands from being chafed while swinging his sledge; and he had also a magic girdle by which, whenever he tightened it round his waist, he redoubled his strength.

It was Thor who cracked, crushed, and pulverized the icebergs and glaciers, or who, in other words, split the skulls of the frost-giants.

Thor is the schoolboy's hero, the original 'Jack the Giant-killer.'

But though called 'the Norse Jupiter,' yet Thor lacks Jupiter's supremacy of rank; for the weather-beaten old pagans of the Northland, in suiting their myths to their climate, refused to render as much honour to the storm-clouds as they did to the sunshine; so Thor was Odin's subordinate; while, further south, Jove was greater than Odin himself.

Thor is a 'Barbarossa'; and his red beard streams through the heavens with streak on streak of fire.

Thor's chariot is drawn by two goats, who are called by characteristic names, one referring to the thunder, and the other to the lightning; thus, Tanjost and Tangrisner, or 'teeth-gnasher' and 'teeth-flasher.'

The Thunderer's domain is called Trudvang (or the thick cloud), and his palace is known as Bilskirner, a pavilion that alternately glitters and disappears, causing the eyes of the mortal gazer to blink.

Like the other gods, Thor goes to the daily council; but he is forbid to ride thither on horseback; for as the road lies over Heimdal's bridge, which is the rainbow, the terrific Thunderer would be so rough a rider as to shake the frail arc to pieces. So he must walk. Nor even in walking is he allowed to step upon the

airy bridge: he can get to Asgard only by wading across several rivers, especially the Ormt, the Kormt, and two other oft-swollen streams, called the Kerlaugs.

Thor is seldom among the feasters at Valhal; for, as he is the defender of Asgard against the frost-giants, he must be always somewhere on the borders of Jotunheim; that is to say, in the cold regions of the stormy North.

This favourite god is the burly hero of as many droll adventures as would fill a book—and quite too many for a mere Appendix.

It is as a fighter on the day of Ragnârok that Thor is to perform his final and crowning exploit, for he will then slay the Midgard-serpent; but the serpent's venom will so smear, so choke, and so poison the victorious hammer-thrower that the unimmortal god, on stepping back to survey the slain monster, will drop dead himself.

Though Thor is thus to perish at Ragnârok, yet his *hammer* is not to be lost; for the famous 'Mjolnir' is to pass into the next world as an heirloom to Thor's two sons, Magni and Modi (or strength and courage). So runs the Eddaic prophecy; a prophecy which shows that even 'the new earth' is not to be without its storms, nor 'the new heavens' without 'heaven's artillery.'

Thor was the only god to whom the old Norsemen (as far as is known) were fond of making a graven image. The hammer-thrower has always afforded to rustic artists a tempting subject. Clever schoolboys can draw him unmistakably with chalk on barn-doors and stone-walls; and he everywhere lends himself to merry caricature. Nevertheless, in serious symbolism, the modern emblem of Norway is no longer Thor's hammer, but St. Olaf's axe.

3. BALDER, the impersonation of the brief but glorious Northern summer.

He is the son of Odin and Friga; the product, in other words, of the vivifying sunshine in union with the teeming earth.

Balder represents the utmost glory of the floral season.

Hence he is best known to English readers by Longfellow's designation, 'Balder the Beautiful;' though he is sometimes styled 'Balder the Best.'

The word Balder is etymologically Prince or Lord; and this ever-welcome 'Lord of the Land' and his lovely bride Nanna (who represents the buds as *he* the flowers) are fit mates; for they both alike are invested with supreme beauty of form and spirit.

Even in the Greek theogony, there are no two divinities who, as husband and wife, are on the whole equal to Balder and Nanna, either in spotless perfection of character, or in popular adulation by mankind; for it may be said that Balder and his faithful bride, though they are mere mythical abstractions, yet are popularly known, admired, and loved as if they were real and living persons.

To the ancient Peloponnesians, who had clear skies all the year round, the summer season did not seem such a special and divine blessing as it did to the mediaeval Icelanders, whose winter was sometimes eight months long.

Hence, though the Hellenic mythology makes much, yet the Icelandic makes far more, of the great glory of sunshine, and of the supreme blessing of warm weather.

Balder and Nanna accordingly are the crowning ornaments of the Arctic pantheon; so that the untimely fate of this lovely pair furnishes, beyond all ordinary fables, a tender theme of human interest and sympathy.

From the very first, this marriage—as we read of it in the Eddas—is full of ominous foretokens of Balder's speedy doom.

His dreams are troubled. What do they presage? The gods are puzzled. Soothsayers are consulted, who answer that Balder must die unless all Nature, both animate and inanimate, shall unite ungrudgingly to petition for the prolongation of his life.

His divine mother Friga, catching at this suggestion, begs every created object and thing—whether beast or bird, insect or worm, tree or rock, breeze or dew—each and all to promise, under oath, to do no harm to the threatened Balder, who (as his mother fondly imagines) will thus be proved to have no enemy, and will therefore be in no danger of a death-blow.

But though all the world was thus laid under a sworn compact to plot no mischief against Balder, yet his father Odin, still full of anxiety, resolved to make a swift ride on horseback down into Helheim in order to consult the spirit of an ancient vala or prophetess, who had long been there at rest in her venerated tomb.

He knew that she could do for him what he could not do for himself—foretell future events.

So Odin saddled his eight-footed steed Sleipner, and galloped with the combined speed of all the eight winds of heaven, onward and onward, downward and downward, from the Garden of the Gods to the domain of the dead; meaning to see with his own eyes, in the underworld, whether any preparations were already in progress for the reception of so unwonted a guest as Balder would be; for as yet no god had suffered the calamity of death; and therefore no god had as yet been doomed to a denizenship in hell.

Moreover, at this stage of the story, the reader will already have drawn the just inference that if Balder should die, and yet not die in *battle*, of course hell and not Valhal must be the bright god's dark residence; for Valhal was the exclusive paradise of heroes fallen in fight, and Balder therefore could not have been wafted by Valkyries to Asgard, but must of necessity be doomed to hell.

In galloping from Valhal to Helheim, Odin's journey was of

exactly the same duration which Milton allowed for Satan's downward plunge from the brink of heaven to the fiery pit—

‘Nine times the space that measures day and night
To mortal men.’

Odin took this long ride without a single attendant—stark alone, on his horse Sleipner, in heaviness of spirit, foreboding evil.

Finally, on the ninth day, after passing the watch-dog Garm, who howled and showed a blood-stained breast, the anxious Odin alighted near the eastern gate of hell, at a mound where the vala whom he sought had lain for ages entombed.

The fragmentary and imperfect narrative does not mention the goddess Hela as opening hell-gate for Odin, nor as receiving him with solemn ceremony; but speaks of Odin as penetrating Helheim without Hela's objection, permission, or notice.

‘Who art thou?’ asked the buried vala, as Odin stood by the grave of the prophetess.

‘I am Vegtam, the son of Valtam,’ answered the Father of the Gods, disguising his name.

‘Long,’ quoth the vala, ‘have I lain under the snows, the mists, and the dews; why dost thou call me up from my rest?’

‘Tell me,’ asked Odin, ‘what means all this stir of preparation? For whom are these gold-bedecked seats? For whom is this new-brewed mead? What famous guest is about to come hither, either from the earth or from the heavens?’

‘It is Balder,’ rejoined the prophetess; ‘he is doomed to be slain.’

‘Who is to slay him?’

‘His brother Höder!’

‘And who is to slay Balder's slayer?’

‘Vali, the son of Rind; for in the runes it is risted that Rind shall bear a son who, when he is but a night old, shall slay Höder, and avenge Balder's death.’

After listening to this prophecy, Odin, more troubled than ever, returned to Asgard, and there found the gods engaged in a merry game of pelting Balder with the various objects which had sworn to do him no hurt.

It was good sport for Balder's fellow-gods to smite their beautiful brother with missiles of all kinds, such as rocks and shells, clubs and axes, swords and gauntlets; for whatsoever struck Balder fell off harmless at his feet; and all Asgard rang with peals of laughter at this happy proof that the best-beloved of the twelve gods was safe against all possible accident or harm.

But Loki, the Norse Mephistopheles, was filled with jealousy and envy at the pleasing spectacle.

‘I will stop this frolic,’ he muttered.

Whereupon, disguising himself as an old and wrinkled dame, or fairy-godmother, he tottered off to Friga, spoke to her with well-feigned admiration of her glorious son, and asked her if it was

indeed true that every tree in all the greenwood had sworn to spare Balder's life.

'Yes, every tree but one,' replied Friga; 'and that one is a mere slight and slender mistletoe growing just east of Valhal, quite too small and feeble to do Balder the least harm.'

Acting on this hint, Loki secretly broke off the mistletoe, strolled with it in his hand to the playground of the gods, resumed his normal and divine shape, mingled amiably with the disporting deities, and casually said to Höder (the god of winter), who was blind,—

'You seem to be taking no part in the pastime; why do you throw nothing at your brother Balder?'

'Because,' replied the blind divinity, 'I cannot see to take aim.'

The crafty Loki, who had brought with him the fatal mistletoe, the plant which had not taken the oath to spare Balder, now cunningly shaped the unsworn shrub into a barbed weapon, gave the prickly thing into Höder's hand, and directed Höder's aim straight at Balder, so that the unhallowed point pierced Balder's heart, and the summer-god fell dead.

Gods and men alike were so horror-struck at Balder's death, that the general consternation recalls Milton's allusion to the awful moment when Eve plucked the apple:—

'Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe
That all was lost.' (P. L. ix. 780, &c.)

Balder's terrified wife Nanna, who was thus suddenly widowed and broken-hearted, died the next day of grief; and their joint burial was a pageant of splendour, the like of which the world had never before seen.

The funeral-pyre, which was built in the form of a ship called Ringhorn, and laden with spices and perfumes, was set ablaze, and while burning brilliantly was pushed out from the shore and left to drift of its own accord, unguided, but self-intelligent, bearing in solitude its two flame-shrouded corpses down into the nether world.

Meanwhile, the Val-father had laid upon the pyre, as a parting gift, his own famous ring Draupner, which had the magical property of reproducing itself periodically in the form of other rings of equal weight; an emblem which, in connexion with Balder's death and burial, is prophetic of Balder's resurrection. So say some expositors. Others find Draupner to be a golden emblem of the ninefold grain-producing fertility of Nature.

In addition to laying Draupner on Balder's pyre, the distressed father also, just at the last moment before the funeral-barge was pushed off from the shore, whispered a farewell word into his dead son's ear.

But what this word was, 'no man knoweth unto this day.'

After Balder's descent into hell, the gods reassembled round the Urdar Fount in Asgard, and took counsel how their lamented favourite could be at once ransomed and permitted to return to the living world, a world which was already sighing wofully in consequence of his premature death.

Hermod, the Norse Mercury, a son of Odin and Friga, and therefore Balder's own brother, was sent down to Helheim by the Val-father to inquire on what terms Hela would consent to open the gate of hell, and permit the illustrious victim to return to the upper world.

Hermod said to Hela—

'Balder is so loved, both among gods and men, that there can be no happiness to the inhabitants either of earth or of heaven till he shall resume his godhead and his glory!'

Hela, who was Loki's daughter, made a crafty reply, characteristic of her inherited cunning.

'Is it true,' she retorted, 'that Balder is so dearly loved as you say he is, both in Midgard and in Asgard? I must first test whether this be so.'

She then pledged her word to Hermod that Balder should be permitted to go back if all created things, animate and inanimate, would, without a single exception, unanimously weep for Balder's death.

Accordingly, Nature, like Niobe, was 'all tears.'

This renewed proof of the universal love for Balder re-excited Loki's envy and jealousy; and so, instead of shedding tears, the arch-mischief-maker, flashing sparks of fire from his eyes, straightway turned himself into the form of a beldame or ogress, took the name of Thok, and mocked while others wept; and thus Loki gave to Hela her needed pretext against issuing a decree for Balder's release.

Balder and Nanna, therefore, on being thus rebuffed, were forced to remain in the underworld until finally, in the revolving cycle of the seasons, the wedded pair of dead divinities could come back by natural resurrection in the ensuing spring, to enact their annual drama anew.

Meanwhile, Balder in Hell gave back to Hermod the ring Draupner, which, on being borne back to Odin, was proof to the Val-father that his beautiful son, though slain, and though kept in durance in the world of shades, yet was still alive, and would return among gods and men the next year.

It is thus seen that, unlike most of the Norse deities, Balder and his bride—despite their ever-recurring annual death—enjoy a kind of semi-immortality: and this is a dignified destiny in which they outrank Odin himself: for the Father of the Gods, when he is once dead from the bite of the Fenris-wolf, is to remain without a resurrection.

Furthermore, Balder and Nanna not only now re-appear every

'The world is weeping for Balder's death.'

'For it is fated that the two
Be parted all the winter through.'

They meanwhile tried many stratagems to repress his growing vigour, binding him with chain after chain; but he gaily broke every fetter, and would not be kept a captive.

He loved the sport of being bound, and of breaking loose—the stronger his bonds, the greater his glee in breaking them.

At length the anxious and baffled gods secretly employed the Black Dwarfs to forge for them a chain called Gleipner, that could not be broken, and which would bind the wolf effectually.

This new fetter, from which so much was to be hoped, was a marvel of mechanism. It was quite worthy to be compared with Vulcan's invisible net. The dwarfs devised an infrangible chain, which they constructed of imponderable materials—such as the breath of a fish, the root of a mountain, the milk of a bird, the echo of a cat's footstep, the tail of a bear, and other equally non-existent things; so that the chain, when finished, was finer than a spider's thread; so fine indeed that the wolf could hardly see it: and accordingly the gods were not surprised that he refused for a while to submit himself to be bound by it, suspecting a trick.

The gods then resorted to ridicule—calling him a lamb, not a wolf.

They mocked him and jeered him, saying that if he could be so intimidated by such a gossamer-thread, he was a poltroon.

Stung by the taunt, the young wolf, vain-glorious of his prowess, finally agreed to be bound, but only on one condition: namely, that during the act of binding him they should permit him to hold fast in his mouth the right hand of one of the gods. as a pledge of their good intent.

All the gods, save one, shrank from accepting the wolf's proviso.

This one exception was Tyr; who, with that courage whereof he was to be ever afterward the supreme representative, thrust his right hand boldly into the monster's open mouth, and held it there while the gods bound the wolf.

The suspicious and angered wolf, perceiving the intent of the gods to keep him thenceforth in captivity, bit off Tyr's hand at the wrist; and to this day in Norway the human wrist is called 'the wolf's joint.'

At Ragnárök, one-armed though he will be, yet Tyr will boldly encounter, not the Fenris-wolf, but another monster of still greater ferocity, to wit, Garm, the terrible watch-dog who is Hela's ever-howling guardian of the gate of hell.

Tyr (or Tew) has given his name to Tuesday, which is Tew's day; just as Wednesday is Odin's (or Woden's) day; Thursday, Thor's day; and Friday, Freyia's day.

5. BRAGI, the patron of bards.

Poetry was invented, not by Bragi, but by the chief god Odin. who, whilst hanging for nine days and nights on the tree Ygdrasil. gave utterance, amid his agony and bloody sweat, to rhythmic sayings called 'runes.'

These Odinic verses, or tuneful outcries of the All-father's suffering heart, were the primal and pre-historic poetry.

Nevertheless, not Odin, but Bragi, is commonly styled in this mythology the God of Poetry; for to Bragi belongs the practical function of promoting among mortal men this god-inspired craft; and hence Bragi is the protector of bards, their heavenly patron, the celestial Maecenas of their earthly tribe.

Bragi and Hermod were sent by Odin to welcome the dead king Hakon to Valhal.

It was from Bragi that the well-known 'Bragi-cup' took its name.

This was a toast usually drunk at the feasts of the Vikings. It was seldom omitted. And it was always a necessary concomitant, not only of every celebration of a national victory, but of every ceremony of installing a new king, on his accession to the throne.

The usage was this:—

Before the heir-apparent was entitled, in the banquet-hall, to sit in the late king's vacant chair at the head of the festive board, he must first sit humbly on a bench at the foot of the table.

Then, as the feast went on, and as the moment drew nigh when healths were to be drunk, the prince who was about to become king advanced to the empty throne-seat, set his right foot upon a rung of the royal chair, and there stood and quaffed a 'Bragi-cup.'

This was a toast to the god Bragi—the god of poetry—and the pledge thus given by the candidate for kingship was simply a way of saying—

'I hereby vow that, as a king, I will so rule my kingdom as to win for my reign the glorious encomiums of Bragi and the bards.'

Bragi's wife was the beautiful goddess Ídun¹ (or Íduna), the custodian of the sacred apples of the gods.

There was also a second Bragi, not a god, but a court-laureate: whose career, covering a long life, culminated during the reign of King Harold Fairhair.

This actual and earthly Bragi was the chief skald of his day. He wrote some famous verses on 'Thor fishing for the Midgard-serpent.' He has left also a memorable ballad entitled 'The Everlasting Battle.' And as the story of Thor and the serpent has already been chronicled in this Appendix, so the other legend also deserves a corresponding notice.

It is a tale worthy of any poet.

Between two rival kings (Högni and Hedin) there arose a causeless quarrel, which brought their two armies face to face with mutual threats of slaughter and extermination.

There was, as usual, a woman in the case.

King Högni had a beautiful daughter Hilda, whom King Hedin had stolen, carried off, and married. Her angry sire took the field

¹ The name 'Ídun' is accented on the first syllable.

for her forcible rescue—an enterprise suggesting the Greek war for the recovery of Helen from the Trojans.

It was in the Orkneys that Högni and Hedin pitched their opposing camps; each in insolent proximity to the other.

Before swords were drawn, there was much parleying; and Hilda went to and fro as a messenger between her husband and her father; the husband offering to the father, in the hope of propitiating his goodwill, a necklace of inestimable value.

Notwithstanding Hilda's entreaties for peace and amity, her father was obstinate to her pleadings and her tears.

'I shall fight it out,' said the stubborn sire.

The battle then began, which (strange to say) never came to an end, but kept going on day after day, nobody knows for how many days, months, or years.

The poetical machinery of this conflict is ingenious. The beautiful Hilda had magical powers; and every night the fair sorceress visited the battlefield—like a Valkyrie—and raised to life every warrior who had, during the day, chanced to be slain on either side; so that the contest was always renewed on the morrow without diminution of the force of either army—and thus the struggle was called 'the Everlasting Battle.'

It is easy to draw more than one moral from such a fable: for instance, a woman who is distracted between her lover and her father must necessarily find herself in a perpetual conflict in which her heart naturally inclines to each of the twain: she is the affectionate partisan of both: and hence, so long as the dispute remains unsettled, she is engaged in an 'everlasting battle.'

But the symbolic meaning of this myth is the perpetual conflict between summer and winter, between light and darkness, between good and evil.

Another and less noble version of this pretty fable spoils the story by nullifying its purpose; for Hilda is needlessly represented as a brutal and malicious witch, seeking to do harm alike to her father and to her husband; yet this clumsy rendering makes her not only unnecessarily wicked, but altogether uninteresting; so that the original beauty of the legend is lost for want of dramatic logic and moral meaning.

6 HEIMDAL, the god of the Rainbow.

He is the son of Odin and of nine different mothers, who are all sisters and all virgins.

The rainbow is called Bifrost.

Heimdall, who has charge of it, is poetically styled 'the Watchman of Heaven'; he is charged with a sentinel's duty of giving instant alarm to the gods on the least sign of any rising by the frost-giants; for if the frost-giants should rise and sally forth without detection, they might steal a march across Bifrost, and

rush unopposed into Asgard, making a capture of the Garden of the Gods.

Accordingly, Heimdal's eyes are keener than the eagle's; and Heimdal's ears are so quick that he can detect the impossible noise of wool as it grows on the backs of sheep, and of grass in the meadows as it sprouts into green.

Bifrost, or the rainbow—which Heimdal defends—was prettily Latinized by the mediaeval monks into 'Tremula Via,' or 'the Trembling Path.'

It trembles so easily that Thor the Thunderer (as we have seen) is not allowed to ride over it on horseback, nor even to set his heavy foot upon it at all, lest he should jolt the fragile arc to pieces.

Heimdal's watch-tower, or beacon of observation, from which he keeps his perpetual gaze on the frost-giants, is called Himinborg, or 'heavenly hill'—reminding us of Bunyan's 'delectable mountains.'

Heimdal (as we already know) has a golden trumpet called Gjallerhorn, which he keeps hidden among the invisible branches of Ygdrasil, and which he will blow on the morning of Ragnârök, in order to marshal the gods and heroes from the palace of Valhal to the Plain of Vigrid, where 'the powers are to perish.'

Heimdal's own part in the great battle will be to meet and fight Loki, in single combat; a duel wherein each will slay the other; after which the rainbow will go to pieces, shrivelled in the final fire that is to burn the world.

Meanwhile, quite apart from any connexion with the rainbow or with Loki, Heimdal is the hero of a totally different and singular myth; for in one of the lays of the elder Edda (see the 'Rígsmaðr') Heimdal is celebrated as the original founder of the three social divisions or orders of mankind; namely, first the order of Serfs; second, the order of Freemen; and third, the order of Nobles.

The tale is quaint:—

Coming to the earth in the guise of a man, and calling himself by the name of Ríg, the god Heimdal visited three different human abodes: the first a squalid thatched cot; the next a comely farm-house; and the last a grand castle.

During the first of these visits (which was to the straw-roofed hovel) he found a couple of humble inmates, man and wife, named Ai and Etta, who were old and childless. They entertained him as best they could with their plain broth and coarse bread; in return for which he repaid them with a son named Thrall. This was a gawky boy with thick legs and hard hands; who grew up to marry a snub-nosed dairy-maid, by whom he became the progenitor of the race of serfs.

The god Heimdal or Ríg in his next visit (which was to the slightly farm-house) found a wedded pair, Afi and Amma, dwelling in comfort—having tools for barn-building, flax for spinning, and

money in the house-chest, yet having no child ; so after partaking of their roast meat and ale, the god gave them a son called Karl, who had red hair and twinkling eyes, and who became expert in the art of breaking oxen and of ploughing fields. This thrifty youth early took to wife a prudent lass, who carried house-keys at her belt ; and the laddie and lassie became the progenitors of the whole race of yeomen or free-holding carls.

In Heimdal's final visit (which was to the great castle) he came upon an aristocratic pair called Fader and Moder. The man was twisting a bowstring for the chase, while the woman was clasping a string of pearls around her snowy neck. But the twain had no child. So after they had honoured their guest with a banquet of game-birds served in silver dishes, he gave to the wealthy chatelan and chatelaine a fine son named Yarl, who, by his subsequent education, was elegantly trained to every courtly accomplishment, and who, after making a grand marriage, became the founder of the Norse nobility or order of earls.

It is thus seen that not only princes and nobles, but also the common people, down even to the humblest peasantry, all alike derive their lineage from the same celestial source, and can trace their proud pedigree up to the great god Rig or Heimdal, 'the Warder of Heaven.'

This is a far higher type of myth than its analogue in the East Indian mythology. For the fable prevails in Hindostan that the Sudras (or humble labourers) spring from Brahma's feet ; the merchants, from his thighs ; the warriors, from his hands ; and the priests, from his head.

This division leaves the Pariahs (or outcasts) no divine origin at all ; while on the other hand (strange to say) every Norseman—whether king or duke, whether carl or serf—might boast of a higher ancestry than could be claimed even by the gods themselves ; inasmuch as the gods themselves were not heaven-descended, but sprang from the frost-giants.

7. HÖDER, the god of Winter.

He was a blind and blundering deity who, during a merry-making of the Asas in Asgard, was tempted by the malicious Loki to aim a mistletoe-arrow at Balder, thereby giving a death-blow to the summer-god.

Höder is sometimes compared to Cain who slew his brother Abel ; but Höder was without 'malice aforethought,' while Cain committed 'murder with intent.'

Nevertheless, Höder's act of fratricide, however unintentional on his part, has to be expiated by his own blind, beguiled, and guiltless self. He must die. Balder's death must be avenged.

The predestined avenger is Vali, son of Odin and Rind, and therefore half-brother to Höder and Balder.

The 'Lay of Vegtam' says—

'Rind shall bear a son who, when he is only one night old, and before he shall wash his hands or comb his hair, shall bring Höder to the funeral-pyre.'

The meaning of this is that the very first sprouting of each year's new vegetation, the very earliest vernal bloom, is a sign that 'the winter is over and gone,' or, in other words, that Höder is dead.

The winter-god then descends into hell, where he remains till his annual resurrection in September.

Höder and Balder (or winter and summer) are to survive Ragnârok, and are to supply a change of seasons in that new planet which is to succeed the present imperfect earth.

8. VIDAR, a personification of the primæval forest; and hence, from the deep hush that prevails in the heart of the woods, he is called 'Vidar the Silent.'

He is a son of Odin, and will outlive his father; for Odin is to perish at Ragnârok, while Vidar is to remain unscathed by the final conflagration of the world, and (unlike many of the gods) is to continue his divinity straight on, uninterruptedly, in the new universe.

Meanwhile, there is a mystical quietude, a perpetual unchangeableness, in Vidar; he is undisturbed by the annual conflict of summer and winter; he maintains in the North his evergreen stronghold from age to age, tranquilly awaiting the approach of Surt and the great day of the perishing of the powers.

Vidar's chosen haunt on earth—until Ragnârok—will be Landvidi. This is a sylvan spot which 'The Lay of Grimner' describes as 'overgrown with branches and high grass.' It is in this retired solitude that Vidar is now completing his terrestrial term of life, and where he justifies his characteristic title as 'Vidar the Silent.'

All things considered, he is perhaps the most powerful of the twelve Norse gods; for though not brilliant and showy like Odin (who is the sun); nor fond of noise and of giant-killing like Thor (who is the thunder); yet it is to be Vidar's great task at Ragnârok to grapple with, to overcome, and to slay the Fenris-wolf; after which, having thus avenged Odin, Vidar is to join with Vali in the wellnigh omnipotent function of reconstructing the ruined world.

How Vidar is thus to prove himself, first the wolf's bane, and then the world's blessing, will be better understood at a later stage of our Appendix, in considering the details of Ragnârok or Doomsday.

9. VALI, the avenger of Balder; and, as such, the representative of the indestructible germ-life or vegetative principle which clothes the earth with annual green, especially with grass and moss in distinction from woods and trees.

Our narrative has already explained how Odin, after Balder's burial, went down into the world of the dead, to ask of an ancient prophetess—there entombed—the question, 'Who would be Balder's

avenger?' In other words, '*Who* would slay Höder?' And the answer was, that a strong child named Vali would be born to Odin and Rind, and that the miraculous babe, when only one day old, would have sufficient growth and strength to slay Höder, and thus avenge Balder's death.

Let the reader understand the situation.

Balder (or the summer) is suddenly struck dead by a mistletoe-shaft, and all the world shudders at the prospect of a long winter of privation and gloom.

But when at length the tedious cold has reached into February or March, a sudden harbinger of happy change is seen in the frosty North: *Vali is born*; that is to say, on some fair morning the year's first sign of renewed vegetation appears. It may be a mere blade of grass, or a chilly crocus, or a watery snow-flower: no matter how slight the growth, it was not there yesterday, but it is there to-day. So winter is vanishing, and Höder is doomed to death.

It is Vali that represents this welcome change from winter to spring.

Thus it is that Vali is Balder's avenger, just as Höder is Balder's bane.

But Vali has also another function to fulfil. He is one of the few Norse gods whose career does not end with the present world; he goes forward into the next universe; for Vali is therein to become the powerful associate of Vidar in reconstructing a new framework of Nature.

These two deities, Vali and Vidar, are to aid each other after Doomsday in the mighty task of building up *de novo*, not only Midgard, but Asgard, or not only earth, but heaven.

'Vali and Vidar,' says the 'Lay of Vegtam,' 'shall dwell in palaces as gods after the quenching of Surt's Muspel-fires.'

10. ULLER, the inventor of snow-shoes and skates.

He guides travellers safely through blinding snow-drifts, and warns trappers and deer-stalkers of treacherous cracks and holes.

Uller's weapon is the bow; and, like Nimrod, he is 'a mighty hunter.'

Considered as one of the twelve gods, Uller makes but a small figure. He is of uncertain parentage; at least his father is not known: his mother was Sif, who, after his birth, was married to Thor; and so Uller is Thor's step-son.

11. FORSETI, the Peacemaker—or god of justice.

Etymologically he is the 'foresitter,' or the chief judge of the court; and his function is to arbitrate between litigants, to settle disputed claims, and especially to allay the angers and jealousies which the other gods foment.

His court-house, or palace of justice, is called Glitner; and it has a roof of silver resting on pillars of gold.

Forseti is the amiable and high-minded son of Balder and Nanna.

12. LOKI, the Devil, the Norse Mephisto.

But he did not have a cloven foot, nor did he limp.

Many etymologists have puzzled themselves over the original signification of Loki's name; some holding that it means 'the destroyer'; others that it is identical with Wloka or Vloka—which is Vulcan—whence Volcano: but Dr. Vigfusson (who was an Ice-lander by birth, and who was the latest lexicographer of his native language) suggests that Loki signifies wolf.

Dismissing the name, and looking at the function, of this paramount genius of evil, we find in the Norse Loki a likeness to the Roman Pluto, to the Persian Ahriman, to the Hindu Siva, and to the Biblical Satan.

Every primitive nation has had its devil or 'Auld Nick,' and down through all the varying mythologies of the world this evil genius comes to us essentially one and the same personage, modified only by circumstances, and especially by climate.

This Appendix has already pointed out Loki's paternity. He was one of the three original gods who created the earth and the human race; these three creative gods were Odin, Hœnir, and Loki, sons of Bor and Bestla, and were all born, therefore, of Jotun (or giant) stock, thus inheriting by birth a bad streak of earthliness and of evil.

Nevertheless (to give the devil his due) we must say, in Loki's behalf, that the bad principles which his later life so signally illustrated did not crop out at the beginning of his career; for when he was colleague with Odin and Hœnir in the creative task of changing the Ash and the Elm into a man and a woman, Loki is described by the Eddas as then 'a benevolent deity.'

But nearly all the Norse gods turned out badly, Loki the worst of all.

His early yoke-fellow, the favourite comrade of his first and best period, was Odin.

We find that between Odin and Loki a quaint ceremony called 'blood-blending' was performed in their jejune days.

Thus, in the Eddaic poem entitled 'Lokasenna,' Loki sarcastically refers to their early intimacy and brotherly affection, and taunts Odin with these words:—

'Hast thou forgotten how, in the older days, O Odin, we twain made our two bloods trickle together into one footprint? Thou didst then swear never to drink a horn of mead offered to *thee* unless a horn were at the same time offered to *me*!'

The ceremony thus alluded to was performed in this wise:—

Two persons wishing to make a sworn compact of mutual friendship (or *camaraderie*), pricked their naked feet till some drops of the blood of each comrade fell into the same footprint. This 'blood-blending' was a sacred act, an act which bound each participant to befriend the other for life.

A survival of this custom, in a modified form, was maintained in

vital usage, in the Middle Ages, among the buccaneers of the Spanish Main, who may be called the Vikings of the West Indies.

Loki and Odin had performed this ceremony—each with the other—in their early days; and these two gods therefore were not only brothers by birth, but comrades by oath.

Some confusion, however, exists as to the recorded genealogy of Loki. The Icelandic records do not all agree. Some of the Eddaic bards call Loki 'the son of Farbeauti and Lauffey': and the question arises, *Who* were Farbeauti and Lauffey that they should enjoy the unique distinction of being the Devil's father and mother?

The mystery would be cleared, of course, by assuming that Farbeauti and Lauffey are but other names for Bor and Bestla.

While we bear in mind that Loki, as we first encounter him in these myths, gave no foretoken of that subsequent malevolence which was to make him the archetype of all mischief, we must also equally bear in mind that the three brothers, Odin, Hœnir, and Loki, were all of Jotun or tainted lineage, all three having in their veins the poisonous ichor of the frost-giants.

Loki, the third brother, was neither more nor less 'base-born' than the other two.

But in the case of Loki, this derived taint of corrupt blood, this innate element of what theologians call 'original sin,' grew to greater proportions in the Norse Mephisto than in any of the rest of the twelve Norse gods. So that finally in this mythology, though Loki always remains a god, yet he turns traitor to the gods, and joins their enemies at Ragnârok; a treason by which he is to work the total ruin of the ancient sovereignty of the gods over mankind.

It is Loki, therefore, who is the real hero of the drama which the Norse myths set forth; for even if the coming collapse of the gods on the battle-plain of Vigrid at Doomsday is to be considered as decreed by the three Norns at the Urdar Fount, or by the One Supreme God in Gimli, still it is Loki and his miscreant progeny who, acting all together for mischief, are to be the chief agents of destruction in the final scene. Without Loki's guidance Surt would be powerless. Without Loki there could be no Ragnârok. Without Loki, Asgard could not be invaded, nor Ygdrasil burnt, nor Heimdal's bridge broken. Loki is to be the pilot, the real leader of the forces of Surt. Loki is the supreme genius of the rebellion; for as to Surt and the Muspelites, they are but Loki's torch-bearing underlings. In other words, Loki, one of the three creative gods who originally made the world, is the god who finally is to plan and execute its total destruction by fire.

But, bad as he is, Loki is the most interesting figure in this mythology, just as his magnificent *aller ego* is the most vivid and vital personage in *Paradise Lost*.

Loki, however, as portrayed by the Eddaic bards, is not a solemn and majestic hero like Milton's Satan: for the Norse

Devil is a lighter and more frivolous character; equally malign, but more sprightly and mirthful, always proving himself a merry Jack-of-all-mischief who, not having been expelled like Lucifer from heaven, had the wit to keep his place at the council-board of the twelve gods, as Judas kept his place at the supper-table of the twelve disciples.

Indeed, Loki always had free access both to Asgard and to Midgard, with full opportunity to play his pranks both on gods and men, and he never failed to be a very active, and generally a very amusing, Mephistopheles—in fact, an ideal ‘Auld Nick.’

Among the famous tricks which Loki contrived were—

First, to have the handle of Thor’s hammer made too short;

Second, to steal from the goddess Ídun the sacred apples of the gods;

Third, to prevent the building of a wall of defence between Asgard and the frost-giants;

Fourth, to kill an inoffensive servant named Fimafeng—a piece of cold-blooded brutality;

Fifth, to carry off Freyia’s necklace ‘Brising,’ and to fling it into the sea; but, above all,

Sixth, to compass the death of ‘Balder the Beautiful’—a tragedy which plunged the whole North into woe.

As the Satan of the Scriptures is ‘bound for a thousand years,’ so Loki also has his season of captivity, though for no strictly definite period; he is quaintly described as tied fast to a three-cornered flint-rock, the ligatures (horrible thought!) consisting of the entrails of his own son!

It is to Loki, furthermore, that this mythology credits the origin of earthquakes. These phenomena are Eddaicly explained by an odd conceit. The fable runs thus:—

Whilst Loki lay bound to the triple-pointed rock, a serpent, which hung over his head, tried to spit venom on his face; but Loki’s faithful wife Sigyn stood devotedly by her captive husband and held a basin over him, intercepting the drops of venom as they fell. Nevertheless, as often as the basin got full, Sigyn had to turn aside a moment to empty it; and during these occasional and momentary intervals, while she was emptying the basin, some venom-drops would fall on Loki’s face, causing him horrible writhings and contortions. These spasms are earthquakes.

The stories told of Loki are multitudinous and ingenious, covering a wide range of invention. They show his cunning, his insolence, his sprightliness, his irrepressible love of mischief, his horrible lusts, his slanders of the gods, and especially of the goddesses, his power of transforming himself into a fish, a bird, or any other creature, his thefts, his perjuries, and his many other crimes; and yet the voluminous catalogue of his evil deeds is never monotonous, for it is always relieved and rendered entertaining by his roystering humour and ready wit.

In a scene of badinage between Odin and Loki, Odin, in order to put Loki to shame before the gods, accuses him of having spent eight years of his life as a 'dairymaid,' doing menial service as a woman, and even becoming so actually feminine as to conceive and bear children.

To complete the Devil's 'family record,' it should be noted that his wife Sigyn bore him two legitimate sons, Narfe and Ole; and that his concubine Angerboda bore him three illegitimate monsters; namely, first the Fenris-wolf, second the Hell-witch, and third the Midgard-serpent.

Loki is to die at Doomsday in single combat with Heimdal, each of whom is to slay the other.

And here the reader, in order to avoid a misconception arising from a similarity of names, should be informed that this mythology has *another* Loki, a frost-giant known as Utgard-Loki, who is not to be confounded with his more brilliant and fiery namesake.

§ 25. THE THIRTEENTH GOD.

In addition to the twelve great gods, there is one more, who, though not strictly a god but a van, must nevertheless be included among the ruling powers of Asgard.

This is Frey.

In the opinion of the early Swedes, Frey occupied so high a rank in the Norse heavens that, next to Balder, he enjoyed the honour of being the deity best loved of mankind.

The reader already knows that the vans (or water divinities) were once at feud with their Asgard superiors (or gods of heaven); that a treaty of amity was made between the contending parties; that each party gave to the other a hostage as a pledge of good faith; and that the hostage whom the vans gave to the gods was Niord, the Norse Neptune, who married the beautiful Skadi (the damsel who chose him for the translucence of his feet).

Niord and Skadi were the parents of Frey.

From the day of Frey's birth, the divine babe was the general darling of all the gods (like Mercury's love-child, the infant Pan, among the Olympians). In fact, before Frey was yet out of his cradle, the fond Asas and Asinias gave him all Alfheim (or Elfland) to be his future suzerainty. This rich endowment was called his 'tooth-gift.'

Inheriting the nautical instincts of his father, Frey became the patron of commerce.

Needing a magical ship, which would always have a fair wind, and which, without the slightest trouble to its owner, could always find a free channel and a safe mooring, Frey employed the black dwarfs to build for him such a vessel; and it was a marvel of mythic workmanship.

This enchanted craft was called Skidbladner, and was big enough to contain all the gods, with all their weapons and accoutre-

ments; and yet was so contrived that, when not at sea, the magic ship could be crumpled together in its owner's hand like a pea-pod, or could be carried about in his pouch like a nutshell or a coin.

The dwarfs also made for Frey another mechanical wonder: this was a golden-bristled Boar—which, though in part a machine, was in part also a living creature—who pulled his master's chariot intelligently, and whose bristles were so bright as to illumine the darkest pathway over which the divine charioteer had occasion to drive the coruscating beast at dead of night; or, if the journey was by day, the glittering boar that drew the vehicle had so delicate a tread that he could gallop even on the rainbow without jarring the fragile arc.

Frey's wooing furnishes the skalds with a sentimental tale:—

One day this young god, who was as yet 'fancy free,' happened to be looking down from Odin's high palace of Lidskaf to the earth beneath, and was suddenly smitten with love at first sight on catching a glimpse of a white-breasted damsel, whom he saw standing afar off in the doorway of her father's cave in Jotunheim.

This gleaming virgin was the beautiful giantess Gerd, daughter of the amphibious Jotun Gymer, or, as he is oftener called, Æger, one of the most boisterous of the sea-giants.

The love-sick Frey, pale with longing, kept his secret to himself for awhile; but his mother Skadi, noticing his pallor, divined the cause, and with woman's wit suggested the cure.

Skadi's pat suggestion was that her languishing son should at once send a faithful and judicious ambassador to Gymer, with a demand for Gerd in marriage.

The errand would of course be perilous; for Jotunheim (or giant-land) was an enemy's country; and accordingly the chosen emissary, in order to be properly armed, would need a weapon of unusual temper—in fact, nothing short of an enchanted blade.

The delicate mission was entrusted to a divine youth named Skirner, Frey's favourite comrade, who bore on this occasion Frey's own magical sword; a weapon that would fight of itself, and that needed only to be held without fear in the champion's hand in order to win for its wielder an inevitable victory.

In fact, Frey injudiciously made a free gift of this incomparable sword to Skirner.

The love-lorn god, in thus giving away his matchless weapon, did not stop to think how sorely he might need it at a future day. Distracted with his passion for Gerd, he forgot for the time being that he was destined to fight at Ragnârok, when, for lack of this same enchanted blade, he would lose his life.

And I may point out, in passing, that we here find a new proof of the lack of omniscience among the Norse gods: for Frey, whom the Swedes thought to be the chief of the gods, failed to foresee that he would fall a victim to Surt just by lack of the sword which,

for the sake of a damsel's love, her young lover too rashly parted with for ever.

Meanwhile, thus armed and accredited, Skirner could not fail in his mission, which he executed with perfect honour and success. His errand was romantic ; and he figures as a faithful friend and gallant champion. Armed with the enchanted blade, the bold ambassador went down alone among the hostile frost-giants ; visited Gymer in the cunning Jotun's chilly sea-cave ; declared Frey's love for Gerd ; demanded the maiden for Frey ; talked with the coy damsel herself ; plied her with gifts, threats, promises, and hopes ; found her somewhat hard to move, yet not relentless ; and finally won her assent to be Frey's wife.

Frey, the god of the harvest, then married Gerd, who (according to Prof. R. B. Anderson) was the impersonation of the planted seed.

§ 26. THE PREDOMINANCE OF ODIN.

Having thus noted the names and characters of the twelve great gods—with Frey added, making thirteen—I will here ask the reader to observe an interesting fact, namely,—

Although these myths were made at a time when the sun was supposed to be a mere satellite of the earth, or a mere brighter sort of a moon, instead of being the governing centre of a planetary system, yet the importance which the Norse mythology assigns to the sun's influence upon the earth and upon mankind could hardly have been greater had the exact scientific truth been known.

Not only does Odin, as the chief of the Asgard deities, represent the sun ; but, after Odin, most of the remaining gods are Odin's offspring, sharing Odin's nature, and co-operating with Odin's work.

Thus, Thor, or the thunder ; Heimdal, or the rainbow ; Balder, or the summer ; Höder, or the winter ; Vidar, or the primaeval forest ; Vali, or the reproductive power of vegetation ; Bragi, or poetry ; Tyr, or war ; Forseti, or peace : all these gods are either the sons or the grandsons of Odin ; so that Odin and his progeny may be called the Royal Family of the Heavens, exercising a preponderating prerogative in the government of the universe.

Even Loki himself, the spirit of evil, the enemy of all the gods, is Odin's brother.

Hœnir too, the hostage given by the gods to the vans, is Odin's brother.

But with all Odin's predominance in the Norse Olympus, it must always be borne in mind that Odin's power, mighty as it seems, yet falls short of omnipotence ; that his reign is temporal, not eternal ; that his army is to be totally routed at Ragnârok by the fire-fiends ; and that notwithstanding his godhead, he, Odin, chief of the gods, is to be devoured by a wild beast.

Accordingly, Odin's chieftainship in this mythology lasts only until Doomsday, after which, whether as All-father or as Val-father, he disappears entirely from the cosmos.

§ 27. HÆNIR THE HOSTAGE.

As this Appendix has already had occasion to call Hænir one of the three creative deities who made the world, the reader may naturally expect to find Hænir's name in the present catalogue of the gods of Asgard.

Nor is there any just reason why it should not be therein recorded, which (if it were) would make the Norse gods fourteen in number.

Still, as Hænir was sent out of heaven to be a perpetual hostage of the gods to the vans—in exchange for Niord, whom the vans gave as a perpetual hostage to the gods—Hænir's name (like Frey's) is commonly given in the class, not of the gods, but of the vans.

Though Odin, Thor, and Loki are to die, yet Hænir is to be immortal, and is to serve as a consecrated priest in the next world.

§ 28. THE PRINCIPAL GODDESSES.

More numerous than the gods, the goddesses cannot be catalogued with strict accuracy, for the reason that there is often no clear distinction between a goddess and a giantess.

Thus, Gerd, though she must be accounted a goddess, yet was the daughter of a giant; and even in marrying Frey she became the wife, not of a god, but of a van.

Moreover, the skalds, with poetic gallantry, often complimented their heroines as goddesses even when those heroines were but mortal women.

The ensuing list of goddesses, therefore, will be restricted to such Asinias as are of unquestioned right to be reckoned as veritable denizens of Asgard.

1. FRIGA, the queen of heaven, the Juno of the North.

She is the personification of wedlock and the family; the patroness and pattern of the domestic virtues; the heavenly guardian of every earthly hearth and home.

Friga is Odin's third and best-loved wife.

It will be remembered that Odin's three marriages represent three different periods and conditions of the earth's surface. Odin's first wife was Jord, or the primæval terrestrial world before it became habitable for man; Odin's second wife was Rind, or the earth as habitable and yet as frost-bound and chilly; Odin's third wife was Friga, or the earth as warm, fertile, and teeming.

It was Friga who became the mother of 'Balder the Beautiful'; and she is a character of high excellence, a matron worthy of her noble son.

Friga's maternal anxiety to bind all Nature by oath to do no harm to Balder has already been narrated.

All that is here to be added is that Friga, with her rich, ripe mind, knows the fate of men and things; but the Edda adds that

'she never tells what she knows': and certainly this is a type of discretion which is not supposed to be widely characteristic of Friga's sex.

Though Friga is styled 'the Norse Juno,' yet Odin's 'queen of heaven' was not like Jupiter's—jealous and irascible—but tender and affectionate, contrasting finely with the Olympian termagant.

2. SAGA, the Muse of History.

She is usually styled the second in rank among the goddesses; and yet she plays a far less conspicuous part in these fables than Freyia, who is the *real* second.

Saga's dwelling-place is Soquabec, a sea-side retreat where, in a chilly cell, she receives a daily visit from Odin; during which the twain dip golden cups into ice-cold waves, and drink to each other, comparing their mutual recollections of the past, and conversing upon—

'Old unhappy far-off things
And battles long ago.'

3. FREYIA, the Norse Venus; the Northern goddess of love.

As a rule, the female characters in the Scandinavian myths are remarkably exempt from the lax and soiled morality of their corresponding representatives in the Greek Pantheon; and this rule finds a signal illustration in Freyia, who, by her exemplary dignity of deportment, has escaped the immortal scandal that attaches to the name of Venus.

Freyia's palace is called Folkvang.

Her chariot is drawn by two cats.

Her husband, who is a sort of celestial 'nobody,' and who is even sometimes nicknamed a 'numbskull,' is Otto Heimski. He fulfils no other function in these myths than to serve as a contrast to his brilliant and beautiful wife. And yet she loves him so dearly that whenever he is away from her she weeps 'tears of gold': so that gold coins are still familiarly called in Scandinavia 'Freyia's tears.'

The Norse Venus has no son; and therefore the Eddaic poetry has no Cupid; but instead of a boy, Freyia has two daughters, one of whom is named Nos (or 'nice'), and the other Gersemé (or 'precious').

As Freyia's father (Niord the hostage) was not a god, but a van, Freyia herself is sometimes styled a vanadis (or water-sprite).

Moreover, in her symbolic character as the Arctic Aphrodité, Freyia fulfils a function unknown to her Cyprian prototype, born of the southern sea-foam; that is to say, after every battle on earth, Freyia divides equally with Odin the souls of the slain. She receives half of them in her heavenly palace of Folkvang, while Odin receives the other half in Valhal.

This point should be especially emphasized, for it illustrates the two great passions of our Gothic ancestors—War and Love.

As Odin represents war, so Freyia represents love.

Odin (as we have seen) gives a daily feast in Valhal, not only to the gods, who are few, but also to the slain heroes, who are many.

In fact, Odin's daily feast in Valhal, although the gods attend it, is mainly in honour of the Einheriar, or the heroic dead.

Valhal is not so much for the gods as for the slain Vikings.

But Odin has no right to monopolize *all* the slain : he may feast *half* of them in Valhal, but he must allow the other half to be feasted by Freyia in Folkvang.

That is to say, half of the heroes dine with Odin on one evening, and dine with Freyia on the next ; and vice versa.

The highest honours to which a valiant Norseman can aspire after his death are to be equally bestowed in Asgard as rewards, first for his courage in battle, and next for his constancy in love.

Freyia knows the use of female finery. She is an adept in the display of ornaments. It was natural that the Arctic heavens, brilliant with the Midnight Sun, with the Aurora Borealis, and with a lucidity of atmosphere which at times makes the firmament, as seen in Iceland, more transparent than as seen in Italy ; it was natural, I say, that some emblematic myth should typify the phenomenal splendours of the hyperborean sky by some jewelled trinket of uncommon lustre.

Accordingly, just as Venus had a wonderful girdle known as the 'Cestus,' so Freyia had a magical necklace called the 'Brisinga,' or the 'Brisingamen.'

This necklace was 'flame-coloured'—burning with the light of many gems—and was Freyia's chief article of jewellery.

When she tossed her head in anger, this blazing carcanet would sometimes burst apart, and the jewels would roll far away, needing to be hunted for with a painstaking search. They might even be scattered to the ends of the earth.

In fact, this celebrated necklace is said by the bards to have been finally lost in the sea, and that it now lies somewhere on the ocean floor, whence it is to be by-and-by dragged up by some happy fisherman in his lucky net.

It is to this necklace that Carl Olaf refers in *The Chameleon's Dish*, when he says—

'In sleep I many a time have found
That jewelled Carcanet
Beyond all cost,
Which Freyia lost,—
That claspt her heavenly neck around,
But which she heedlessly unbound,
Till all the jewels were unset
And sank into the slimy ground—
Not harmed, but hid away :
For skalds there be, who say,

That still the Carcanet is whole,
And is the same which Loki stole;
And that in Strelsa Bay
It shall be found some day.'

(*The Chameleon's Dish, or Carl Olaf's Canticle, stave xiii.*)

There is a mythic story that Loki and Heimdal once fought a duel, of which this lost treasure—before it was sunk finally in the sea—was in some way the provoking cause. Loki seems to have purloined the famous necklace from Freyia's jewel-case; whereupon Heimdal, in order to recover the stolen treasure, challenged Loki to a personal combat of a unique kind. The two combatants met off the coast of Singastein, and fought in the sea-water in the form of *seals*.

Ulfer Ugasson, an Icelandic skald of the tenth century, says of Heimdal on this occasion that 'the sturdy son of nine mothers won the fair necklace of stones.'

Heimdal, on recovering the trinket, restored it to Freyia.

The early Norsemen conferred a special honour on the goddess Freyia, for as they divided the week into five instead of seven days, they named the fifth day 'Friday,' or Freyia's day, corresponding to the Latin *dies Veneris*, or day of Venus.

4. ÍÐUN, the guardian of the sacred apples of the gods.

This is a variation of the Greek legend of the Hesperides.

According to the Norse myth, the gods of Asgard, having the taint of mortality upon them in consequence of their low birth, and being therefore (like human creatures) subject to decay and death, were compelled to renew their youth from time to time by resorting to a magic expedient.

This consisted of eating enchanted apples.

These sacred apples had the power of restoring the enfeebled divinities to their pristine health and vigour.

'Comfort me with apples,' says a well-known scripture text.

Every Norse god needed this kind of comfort, for without the revivifying charm which the sacred apples of Asgard had upon the Asas who ate them, the whole circle of gods and goddesses would have grown prematurely old, and would have withered away long before the foredoomed morning of Ragnârok.

The sacred apples, so necessary for the health and preservation of the gods, were kept in the pious care of the goddess Ídun, the wife of Bragi.

She is described by the ancient bards as a lovely character, noble in every respect, a gentle, pure, and beautiful deity.

Being guileless herself, she did not suspect guile in others, and accordingly the apples were artfully stolen from her.

The gods were in consternation, knowing that their godship would ooze away unless the lost fruit could be found.

But they did not accuse Ídun of any neglect; for they rightly

suspected the real culprit, who was none other than Loki, the arch mischief-maker.

His confederate in the theft was the giant Thiassi.

The gods caught Loki, accused him, tortured him, and got the apples back from him : and great was the need of the recovered fruit : for though the gods, to please their palates, could feast daily on the boar Sæhrimner in Valhal at Odin's table, yet nothing save the refreshing taste of Ídun's apples could keep the divine wassailers from growing wrinkled and old.

It is not a little singular that the same fruit which brought wreck and ruin to Adam and Eve in Eden, brought health and youth to the gods and goddesses in Asgard.

5. GERD, the beautiful young giantess in Jotunheim whom Frey espied one day while he stood gazing down from the top of heaven. He fell in love with her on account of the whiteness of her bosom. And we have already seen how he sent an embassy to her father, demanding and receiving her in marriage.

6. FULLA, the goddess of abundance ; but her emblem, instead of a Cornucopia (or Horn of Plenty), is what the Northern women envy her for as more precious than wealth, namely, a wavy deluge of flowing hair, flooding her shoulders, and rippling down to her knees.

7. NANNA, the representative of the bloom of spring.

She is the wife of 'Balder the Beautiful' ; and their son is Forseti, the god of peace and reconciliation.

Nanna's annual re-marriage with Balder every spring is an old pagan fancy which has not yet lost its vitality even in Christianized Scandinavia.

But the story is not always told in the same way.

According to one rendering, Balder's sudden death from the mistletoe-shaft so overwhelmed Nanna that she immediately died of grief, and was burnt on the same funeral-pyre with her husband.

But another form of the fable more rationally represents Nanna, not as dying with Balder, nor as descending with him into hell, but as living in sorrowful widowhood on the earth during his temporary absence in hell, and as waiting with wifely eagerness for his return from the nether world in the spring.

Besides, if Nanna and Balder died together during their brief honeymoon, when was their son Forseti born ?

8. GEFYON, the goddess of virginity, the patroness of 'old maids.'

At the death of good women who have never been married, but who have lived useful lives in 'single blessedness,' their beatified spirits are received by the goddess Gefyon, to dwell with her in heaven as her 'maids of honour.'

Gefyon fulfils also a second function as a symbolist: she represents health and strength in women, and shows the female capacity for heroic endurance.

The following myth connected with her name suggests the tale of Dido and the founding of Carthage:—

King Gylfi of Sweden, not suspecting Gefyon to be a goddess, but only a stout farm-maiden, agreed to recompense her on a certain occasion by giving her, in lieu of a money fee, as large a piece of land as she could plough with four oxen in a day and a night.

Gefyon's plough worked wonders!—for the mighty furrows which it dug into the earth made the deep chasm which is now covered by Lake Wener in Sweden; and moreover the soil which Gefyon's plough thus flung out, to make room for the lake, fell over against Denmark, adding to that country the portion which now constitutes Jutland.

9. SIF, the wife of Thor.

The Thunderer has a handsome wife, a veritable Norwegian beauty!

It is she who gives the Norse children their yellow hair, a hue borrowed from her own.

In fact, Sif's braids are so golden that a gold coin is sometimes metaphorically called 'a lock of Sif's hair.' (We have already noted that in like manner such coins are sometimes termed 'Freyia's tears'.)

Loki, who was always vexing Thor, wrought him to an unwonted rage one day by mischievously cutting off all Sif's beautiful hair.

When Thor saw that his wife's yellow locks had all been shorn away, he threatened to crush every bone in Loki's body.

The Devil, who is always portrayed in these myths as a coward, trembled from head to foot: he cringed and begged for his life: and, in his extremity, he promised to get for Thor's weeping dame a more beautiful head of hair than she had ever yet worn.

This pledge appeased both Thor and Sif, whereupon Loki, to show his gratitude at being allowed to escape with his bones unbroken, determined to give the injured couple a delightful surprise.

And he did!

It was to the black dwarfs that Loki had recourse in this emergency. He engaged them to make for Sif, out of the purest gold, the fairest yellow hair that had ever yet been seen in the world!

And all the Norse children have inherited it ever since!

10. RAN, the goddess of the sea.

She is Æger's wife.

Her husband is not a god, nor even a van, but a sort of triton ; and yet his wife Ran is generally styled a goddess.

Ran bears to Æger a great family of romping daughters : these daughters—restless, tumultuous, and beautiful—symbolize the rolling billows.

The English noun 'æger' is this same sea-giant's name applied to the inrush of the swift flood-tide.

11. RIND, the goddess who typifies the earth's frozen crust.

She is wooed by Odin (or the sun) and becomes the mother of the stalwart babe Vali, an infant prodigy who, when only a night old, slays Höder (or winter), and thus avenges the death of Balder (or summer).

Rind is the second of Odin's three wives ; and though she and her husband are not to be endowed with immortality, but are both to perish at Ragnârok, yet their wonderful son Vali is to survive the shock of Doomsday, and is to co-operate with Vidar in the task of creating the next (and nobler) universe.

12. SIGYN, the wife of Loki.

It might be supposed that Loki's wife, in order to be a fit mate for her Satanic husband, ought to be a she-devil ; but Sigyn, on the contrary, is one of the finest of female characters, a splendid type of wifely devotion, kindness, and fidelity. (We have already seen how she held a basin over her husband's head to keep a serpent's venom from falling on the captive devil's face.)

13. VAR, the goddess of betrothals.

Pagan as she is, this gentle Asinia is sometimes, even in these Christian days, invoked in Norway to give her ancient and ever-coveted blessing on an 'engagement ring.'

14. SKADI, wife of Niord the hostage, and mother of Frey and Freyia.

Skadi's choice of a husband—by the beauty of his feet—has already been described.

The marriage was memorable in Asgard for the mutual happiness of the married pair. They had but one ground of difference. Skadi, who had been brought up among the mountains, did not like the sea ; and Niord, who had been brought up by the sea, did not like the mountains. The following spat or tiff (illustrating this disagreement) is recorded in one of the Eddaic poems :—

'NIORD. I hate the wooded hills. And as to the howling of wolves, it is loathsome to me. I long for my fiords and for my swans.

SKADI. Pooh ! I hate the sea-beach, where I cannot get a quiet nap for the incessant screaming of the gulls.'

§ 29. THE GIANTS.

The chief Jotuns (or giants) impersonate the power of the frost ; and are the dreaded symbols of the Arctic cold. With malice to mankind, they still rule the North, and will there continue their bleak ascendancy while the present system of Nature lasts ; but at Doomsday (or Ragnârok) the frost-giants are to be annihilated by the fire-fiends under the joint machinations of Surt and Loki.

The appended list includes the most notable of the frost-giants :—

1. YMER, the cosmic giant out of whose body the earth was made.
2. BOR, the theogonic giant who (by his wife Bestla) became the progenitor of the race of gods.
3. DELLING, the day ; sometimes called, not a giant, but a dwarf.
4. RESVELGER, an aerial Jotun who wears an eagle's plumage, and whose flying wings produce the cold wind.
5. GYMER, oftener called Æger.

He is the father of the beautiful giantess Gerd, whom the vanagot Frey married.

This giant Æger (Frey's father-in-law) is a kind of triton, and has a spacious grotto under the waves. To this submarine retreat the gods come down from Asgard once a year, at harvest time, in order to carouse and make merry. In fact, their annual festivity in Æger's hall is a sort of thanksgiving dinner. The occasion is always bibulous to a Bacchanalian degree.

When this yearly carousal was first instituted, the sea-giant had great difficulty in supplying his thirsty guests with sufficient mead ; for he did not possess a kettle big enough wherein to brew as much as they were capable of drinking.

But Thor and Tyr, to provide against this deficiency in future, went off together on a tramp to Jotunheim to the cave of a land-giant named Hymer, who was said to have a kettle of colossal size.

In fact, it proved to be so huge that Thor, in bringing it away, had to put it upon his head like a helmet ; and he found that it came down over his ears and even over his shoulders, covering the great god half out of sight.

There was never afterwards any lack of drink at Æger's harvest-feast.

The kettle was a 'rast' (or mile) in depth, and was no inappropriate or extravagant image of a Norwegian fiord, several of the fiords being nearly a mile deep.

6. ORVANDEL, called 'Orvandel the Wise.'

He was the husband of the sorceress Groa, the same who tried to charm a flint-stone out of the forehead of Thor.

There is a merry tale of Thor and Orvandel :—

Wishing to do a kindness to Orvandel's wife, who was lamenting her husband's long absence in the Far North, Thor went Northward in search of the missing giant, and found him benumbed with frost.

Thor immediately wrapped Orvandel in reindeer-skins, to keep him from freezing to death, and then put him in a basket to carry him home to the anxious Groa.

The weather continued bitterly cold.

While crossing the twelve icy streams known as the Elivagar, Thor in his haste neglected to notice that one of Orvandel's toes had accidentally protruded from the basket, and was already solidified into an icicle.

Thor at once broke off the frozen toe, and flung it up into the sky, where it became the star known as 'Orvandel's toe.'

A further reference to this amusing tale will necessarily be given when we speak of Groa, Orvandel's wife, whose name will appear among our giantesses.

7. **VAFTRUDNER**, a thick-skulled giant who bragged that he was the wisest of his race; and accordingly the god Odin, in the guise of a way-worn traveller by the name of Vegtam, entered the cave of the vain boaster, and challenged him to a contest of question and answer.

Vaftrudner, confident of an easy victory, proposed as the condition of the wordy wrangle that the discomfited party, whoever he might be, should forfeit his head to his successful rival.

A long and ingenious dialogue then follows, in which the giant is finally worsted by the god, and pays the fatal penalty, as a warning against self-conceit and vainglory.

Another form of this myth represents Odin as putting riddles to King Heidrick; and one of the riddles runs thus:—

'Four ganging, three hanging, two showing the way, two keeping the dogs off, and one (ever dirty!) lagging behind. . . . Read me my riddle!'

And the king replies—

'A cow!'

8. **MUNDILFARI**, the father of the sun and moon.

He thought his two children so beautiful that the earth was not good enough for them, and he therefore begged of heaven that they might be allowed to dwell in the sky.

They will remain in the sky until Ragnârok, when the Fenris-wolf will swallow the sun, and when another wolf (called Managarm) will swallow the moon.

9. **MEIMER**, the best of all the giants; the keeper of Meimer's Well, or the Fount of Wisdom.

This good giant—whose name is variously spelt Meimer, Mimir, or Mim—is so profound in his knowledge, and so judicious in his

advice, that even Odin consults him concerning future events, especially wars.

In fact, Odin, for the precious privilege of drinking from the wisdom-giving waters, sacrificed one of his eyes; pawning it to Meimer; and the sun-god has ever since gone around the world with but a single eye.

Meimer also drinks from his own deep well, borrowing from Heimdal for this purpose the celebrated Giallerhorn, the horn which Heimdal is to blow (like Gabriel's trumpet) on the morning of Doomsday.

Meimer's daily draught, which he dips from the deep well with this huge horn, is referred to in 'The Vala's Prophecy' in these words:—

'I know where Heimdal's horn is hidden under the shadowy Holy Tree. Mim drinks out of the clanging horn a draught of mead every morning from the burn.'

Another similar reference runs thus:—

'Mim drinks wisdom from the burn, out of the yell-horn.'

The sun descending into the sea (or Odin bending his head to drink of Meimer's well) is an idea in harmony with the thought in Wordsworth's mind when he said—

'Wisdom is oft-times nearer when we stoop
Than when we soar!'

The final consultation between Odin and Meimer at the well of wisdom is to take place on the morning of Doomsday, when the wise giant will suggest to the doomed god the plan of the battle of Ragnârok (or the Arctic Armageddon).

10. BOLTHORN, the father of the giantess Bestla; and as Bestla was Odin's mother, Bolthorn was therefore Odin's grandsire.

The name 'Bolthorn' is etymologically Balethorn, and shows Odin's tainted origin.

11. THIASSI, the apple-thief, who co-operated with Loki in stealing the apples of the gods from the goddess Ídun, in whose care they were kept.

When the gods missed the apples, they punished Loki with torture, and Thiassi with death.

After Thiassi's death, his eyeballs (being of uncommon brightness) were fixed in the firmament, and became the celebrated twin stars known ever since as Castor and Pollux.

Thiassi's daughter, the beautiful giantess Skadi, was enraged at the fatal punishment inflicted upon her father; and she at once complained to the gods, speaking in person before their council at the Urdar Fount, and indignantly demanding the payment of a 'blood fine,' or, in other words, a compensation due to her as a *solatium* for her bereavement; and we have already narrated how, in their happy settlement of Skadi's claim, they allowed her to

choose one of the gods in marriage, and how she chose Niord, thinking him to be 'Balder the Beautiful,' for she had to make her choice among the divine candidates by looking only at their feet.

12. RUNGNER, the strongest of the frost-giants.

He was so strong that he rashly ventured to challenge the god Thor to a duel, or 'holmgang.'

It was fought at Grottungard.

At the moment when Thor flung his hammer, Rungner flung a flint-stone. The two missiles met in mid-air. But nothing could stay the irresistible hammer. It not only split the flint-stone in twain, but sped onward and crushed Rungner's skull. Thor, however, did not escape without a bad wound; for one of the fragments of the flint-stone stuck fast in his forehead.

Here was a case for superhuman surgery.

So Orvandel's wife Groa, a sorceress who wrought cures by incantation, tried to charm away the intrusive splinter; and we shall by-and-by see why she did not succeed, and why, in consequence, the god of thunder wears the flint-stone embedded in his forehead to this day.

13. THRYM, a frost-giant who, in a spell of calm weather, stole Thor's hammer, and hid it nine 'rasts' (or miles) underground.

The bold thief then sent a saucy message to the gods, offering to restore to them the hammer if, as a ransom for it, they would bestow on him the beautiful goddess Freyia to be his bride.

Wishing to get back the hammer, yet not willing to give up Freyia (who was their 'Venus'), the gods were long in a quandary, until at last Loki planned an ingenious trick.

He sent word to the giant that the offer to give up Freyia was reluctantly but necessarily accepted by the gods; that the bride therefore was already on her swift way to Jotunheim; and that a magnificent feast of welcome ought of course to be prepared at once to await her on her arrival there.

Meanwhile, to carry out his crafty plan, Loki borrowed from Freyia all her best finery, including her famous Brising necklace; and with these female garments and ornaments the merry Northern Mephisto dressed the huge god Thor in the fashion of a bride, tricking him out like an overgrown girl, braiding his hair, covering his face with a bridal veil, and hanging from his girdle (according to custom) a housewife's typical bunch of keys!

To the Thunderer, thus disguised as a betrothed maiden, the quick-witted Loki acted as an obsequious servant.

The stratagem succeeded so well that it has ever since been regarded as one of the Devil's cleverest devices.

On arriving at the giant's cave, Thor and Loki, hungry from their long journey, were delighted to find a banquet already upon the board for the supposed bride; whereupon the huge Thor, in his

maiden toggery, and with Loki to act as his valet, sat down at once, and ate a whole ox, half a dozen salmon, and all the sweetmeats, besides gulping down three whole kegs of mead !

The giant looked on with wonder, and said in a whisper to Loki, 'I never before saw a bride with such an appetite, nor a damsel with such a thirst.'

Whereupon Loki, ever ready with an answer, replied, 'Freyia has eaten nothing for eight days, so greatly has she longed for Jotunheim.'

This explanation pleased the giant Thrym, who then gallantly undertook to lift Thor's bridal-veil, and to kiss the majestic bride: but the amorous giant sprang back astounded, exclaiming, 'Why are Freyia's eyes so keen? They shoot fire!'

Loki replied, 'Freyia has not slept for eight nights, so greatly has she pined for Jotunheim.'

The unsuspecting Thrym was flattered by this doting response, and at once gave command that the hammer should be brought from its hiding-place and laid in the mighty maiden's lap.

Thor laughed aloud as he once more clutched the handle: and to keep up the sport he struck a few blows with the invincible mallet, putting an end to the wedding-feast by crushing the giant Thrym and all his evil crew.

14. STARKAD, a giant-king who had eight hands.

He was doomed by the Norns (or Fates) to receive a wound in every fight.

After one of these fights, it was discovered that one of his wisdom-teeth had been knocked out. This huge tooth, the wonder of his Christian enemies, was so big and so hollow that they put it to a public use as a church-bell. It long served to call Christian Norsemen to their prayers.

Starkad, though doomed to suffer some mutilation in every struggle, never shrank from any contest; and his eulogistic bards say of him that finally he even continued to fight after his head was cut off!

15. MOKERKALFI, a colossal giant, nine miles high, and three miles broad; all made of clay; having not the heart of a hero but of a mare; so that the enormous image, always at the approach of Thor, showed a sign of terror by breaking out with a profuse sweat.

16. BELI, a giant whom the god Frey (having no sword) slew with a reindeer's horns.

17. AMLODI, whose chief and only claim to be mentioned among the Norse giants is the fact that the word 'Amlodi' is the same as 'Hamlet'; and this giant therefore deserves some respect as the namesake of the 'Prince of Denmark.'

§ 30. THE GIANTESSES.

Some of them were beautiful; others hideous. Thus, Gerd was so white-throated that she attracted the god Frey, who took her to wife. On the other hand, Angerboda (Loki's concubine) was the most repulsive of hags. The following list includes all types of giantesses, from noble to base:—

1. BESTLA, the wife of Bor, and the mother of the three original gods—Odin, Hœnir, and Loki.

2. LODYN, or (as she is more commonly called) Jord, the first wife of Odin, and the mother of Thor the Thunderer.

3. NOTT (the night). She espoused Delling, or the dawn. Their child is Dag, or the day.

4. GULLVEIG, a type or emblem of gold tried by the fire. Though thrice burnt in the furnace, yet Gullveig always came out not only alive, but more and more beautiful. Thus it is that she powerfully excites the greed of mankind. Her history is obscure, and somewhat incomprehensible; but she belongs to the many myths which illustrate the *auri sacra fames*, or 'the accursed thirst for gold.'

5. HELA, or HEL; the hell-witch; the guardian of Helheim, or the world of the dead.

She is Loki's daughter by the hag Angerboda, and her office is to sit as portress at the gate of hell, attended by her watch-dog Garm. This watch-dog is the fiercest of all hounds, outdoing in bloodthirstiness the three-headed Cerberus of the Greeks.

At present Garm is bound, but at Doomsday he will be loosed, and will take part in overthrowing the gods.

Hela's most characteristic rôle in the Eddaic tales is her negotiation with Odin and Friga (by the help of Hermod) for the return of Balder from Hell: a compact which Hela broke, as we have mentioned in our account of Balder.

Helheim, which is the world of the dead, is poetically styled 'Hela's dread abode'; and how dread it is may be gathered from a description written of it by an ancient skald, who apparently had caught a glimpse of its interior, for he gives a number of strange particulars concerning this celebrated 'prison-house.'

He says, for instance, that Storm-cave is its portico; Despair, its doorway; Stumbling-stone, its threshold; Famine, its banquet-table; Remorse, its meat; Anguish, its drink; Dilatoriness, its man-servant; Slatternliness, its maid-servant; Nightmare, its guest-chamber; Thorns, its pillow; and Lamentations, its bed-curtains!

6. GROA, the sorceress who tried to extract the flint-stone from Thor's forehead.

We have spoken of her already, but more is now to be told.

She was a kind-hearted giantess; and as the wife of 'Orvandel the Wise,' she so dearly loved her husband that she pined for him whenever he was away from home.

Possessing the gift of magic, she used her incantations upon Thor till (as we have seen) she partially succeeded in dislodging the flint-stone. That is, Thor could feel it move, like a loose tooth. And he was so confident that Groa would finally extract it, that in his eagerness to reward her in advance for her skilful treatment, he resolved to give her a pleasant surprise by bringing back her husband from the Far North.

For this purpose (as already narrated) Thor went off unbeknown to Groa in search of Orvandel; found him; and brought him back in a basket.

On going to Groa's house with the basket, Thor did not at first give any hint of what his big basket contained, but simply submitted himself—like a doctor's patient—to a renewal of Groa's surgical treatment.

Just as the skilful sorceress was on the point of achieving a perfect success, Thor, who felt the flint-stone growing looser and looser, and who could not contain his joy and gratitude at the thought of getting rid of it, suddenly spoiled the operation by overturning his basket and dumping out its living hulk of flesh and blood.

The astonished Groa was so much delighted that, in the rapture with which she greeted her husband, she forgot to continue her incantations over Thor; the magic spell was broken beyond renewal; and the shard that stuck in Thor's skull is destined to stick there till Doomsday.

It occasionally moves and rattles, especially when he shakes his head in anger and impatience.

(There are some features in this old Norse comedy that remind us of Falstaff carried in the buck-basket to Datchet-Mead).

7. **ANGERBODA**, the hag who bore to Loki (or the Devil) his three monstrous children; these three being the Fenris-wolf, the Midgard-serpent, and the Hell-witch.

8. **HEIMDAL'S NINE MOTHERS.**

Heimdál, the god of the rainbow, had ten parents; that is to say, a father and nine mothers. His father was Odin; and his nine mothers were Gialp, Greip, Estla, Angeya, Ulfrun, Eyrgafa, Imt, Atla, and Jarnsaxa. These nine mothers were all virgins and all sisters. And they represent the multicoloured and prismatic intensity of the rainbow as seen in the Arctic skies in summer.

§ 31. **THE DWARFS AND THEIR WORKS.**

The origin of the dwarfs is accounted for in a manner which reflects no great lustre on their ancestry. They were maggots in

the dead body of the cosmic giant Ymer. For, after the giant was cut to pieces, and his various limbs and members were all distributed by the creative gods so as to form mountains, rocks, forests, and islands, it is said that an unused part of his carcass bred maggots, and that these maggots, in the course of time, became the celebrated race of the Black Dwarfs. Verily, there is nothing new under the sun! What are these primaeval maggots but cosmic antetypes of modern microbes?

The dwarfs are many: their names, as given in the Eddas, would make a long catalogue; so only a few of them will be cited, as follows:—

1. MODSOGNER, the chieftain and leader of the Black Dwarfs.
2. DURIN, the next in rank after Modsogner.
3. NORDRI, SUDRI, AUSTRI, and VESTRI, or North, South, East, and West.
4. NYI and NIDI, or the crescent and the waning moon.
5. IVALDI, who (a pigmy Vulcan) was the chief blacksmith of the underground gnomes.

The most remarkable pieces of mechanism fabricated by the dwarfs were—

1. Sif's yellow hair—which they made of fine gold—to take the place of the tresses which Loki cut off.
2. Frey's ship Skidbladner, that could hold all the gods, with all their war equipments, yet which, when not afloat, could be crumpled together into the size of a pea-pod and carried about in Frey's hand.
3. Odin's spear Gungner, which never missed its aim.
4. Frey's golden-bristled boar Gullinbursti, that not only drew the god's chariot, but at the same time illumined the roadway over which he drove at night.
5. Odin's ring Draupner, which had the property of periodically multiplying itself eightfold or ninefold—in fact, without limit.
6. Thor's hammer, which was decided by the gods to be, on the whole, the most clever piece of work ever done by the dwarfs; a nearly perfect weapon, which had only one fault, namely, the handle was too short.

§ 32. THE SOMA DRINK.

The notion of 'divine inspiration,' or the spiritual help which men receive from the celestial world, is considered by some interpreters to be inculcated in these pagan myths under the figure or emblem of a sacred drink called the Soma cup.

This myth takes several forms, the main idea in each being always that of an 'inspiring draught.'

But I fail to find a religious significance in the Soma cup.

On the contrary, this drink (as mentioned in the Eddas) seems to me nothing more than a poetic symbol of the warm and quickening stimulus which our Gothic ancestors derived from wine or mead; an excitement which was always one of their highest delights, and which they idealized in their poetry by the name of the Soma drink.

It was also called Odrœrer, or blood-cheerer.

It had a still commoner and more tavern-like name, Suttung's ale.

By whatever designation the bards refer to it, the Soma drink was certainly not of celestial decoction, but was composed of earthly ingredients, and was manufactured by the very earthliest of all beings: for it is described as the invention of the black dwarfs, who live and labour underground.

Furthermore, long before the Soma drink became known to Odin and the gods, it was purloined from the dwarfs by the frost-giants, who took it to Jotunheim, and kept it hidden in a cold cave or cellar (an ideal place for storing mead or ale!)

The fame of this comforting beverage finally reached Odin in Asgard; and as he lived on drink alone (never eating a morsel of solid food) he planned a most *unspiritual* piece of roguery by which he went down into Jotunheim, wheedled the frost-giants out of their precious liquid, and carried it away with him to heaven.

The story of Odin's adventure among the frost-giants, and of his adroit capture of the Soma drink, is anything but religious.

His stratagem was this:—

Ascertaining that the blood-warming mixture which the black dwarfs had brewed, and which the frost-giants had confiscated, was secreted in the cave of the old giant Suttung (or Seftung), where it was kept under the watch of the giant's young daughter Gunlad (or Gunflet), the crafty god Odin visits the giant's retreat in the guise of a noble suitor to the fair damsel, wins her love, despoils her honour, steals the mead, and carries it to the sky.

This is just the sort of myth to account cleverly for the subtle effect produced by intoxicating drinks: they are an insidious temptation; they excite the most grovelling kind of amatory passion; they prompt even high and generous minds to acts of preternatural cunning; they destroy personal dignity; and they lead both gods and men to acts of base and ignoble behaviour.

In all Odin's history there is no other incident in which he appears in so shameless a light as in his vile conduct toward the young maiden Gunlad; a shamelessness which he himself afterward confesses: for in the lyric called the 'Havamal,' he says, 'In Gunlad's cave I was drunk, I was overdrunk.'

And he adds, 'I gave to Gunlad a wicked return for her true love.'

It seems wholly irrational to connect this piece of debauchery and low cunning with anything so high and holy as 'divine inspiration.'

A more dignified form of the Soma myth represents Odin as descending from the Gallows Tree into hell, and there receiving the drink from the giant Midvitner. But even in this case—though Odin is not here accused of any crime—yet a drink which is brewed under the earth, and which is kept stored in hell, can hardly be called a cup of heavenly inspiration!

No, the Soma draught has no religious significance whatever!

In fact, when Odin sought for high inspiration, he went to the Well of Wisdom, not to the Soma cup.

Moreover, at the banquets in Valhal there was no Soma drink; the only beverage was goat's milk—for such was Odin's so-called 'mead.' The skalds are explicit in saying that this heavenly mead, which was handed round by the Valkyries to the guests in Valhal, was all supplied from the milk of a single goat—the goat Heidrun, who lived on the leaves of the tree Lerad.

The conclusion is irresistible that the Soma cup, instead of conveying the idea of 'divine inspiration,' is simply a symbol of the cherished and universal drinking custom of the old Goths; who were the world's chief wassailers and cup-clinkers; who drank copiously to their king, and saluted him as a direct descendant from Odin; and who, to add emphasis to their loyal toast, invented the Soma myth, which was their way of saying, 'Our good king, whose health we drink, comes down to us from Odin; and this good mead, in which we drink our king's health, comes down to us from Odin also.'

§ 33. THE GREED OF GOLD.

Running through this mythology is a continuous chain of references to what the Latins called *auri sacra fames*, or 'the accursed thirst for gold.'

Soon after the birth of the Asas (or the Norse gods) they began to build in Asgard (or the Norse heaven) a golden temple, with seats, altars, and ornaments, all of the same precious metal.

In fact, among these Gothic gods, gold was their first building material; which, as it was supplied to them by the imagination of the poets, was so abundant and so lavish that this primal period of celestial magnificence, coupled as it was with uncorrupted innocence—for the gods were still pure in heart—was called the Golden Age.

But temptation assailed the Asas in due time, and they lost their 'original uprightness.'

The danger came from without, and entered Asgard in the insidious form of forbidden pleasure introduced from the Jotun world.

In other words, the gods were charmed and perverted by feminine influence of a vulgar type.

Lured by the gold in Asgard, three beautiful giantesses, amorous

and greedy, contrived to get across the Ifing River, which flowed between Asgard and Jotunheim; and on finding themselves unopposed in their progress, pushed forward, and succeeded in entering the Garden of the Gods; where, displaying their beauty and bartering it for a price, they thus introduced into heaven, at one and the same time, the twin passions of lust and avarice.

It is an instructive instance of 'comparative mythology' that, as in the Paradise of Eden, so also in that of Asgard, the original catastrophe came through feminine culpability.

Cherchez la Femme has therefore ever since been the proverbial formula for philosophic inquiry into what is called 'the origin of evil.'

Accordingly, this ungallant proverb is a perennial jest, and will probably outlast a thousand wittier flings and wiser saws.

But whether introduced into heaven by women, or into earth by men, certain it is that the *auri sacra fames*—'the accursed thirst for gold'—has marked the whole long history both of the gods and of the human race.

It is one of the chief chapters of the Norse mythology.

How the curse was laid upon the gold, and how the malediction passed thence from the metal to the miser, is a long story, whereof the essential points are these :—

One day while Odin, Hœnir, and Loki, the three eldest-born of the gods, were walking about Norseland in disguise, they chanced to come to a river-bank whereon, among the water-flags, they espied a sleek, plump otter just about to eat a salmon which he had caught in the stream.

Loki threw a stone, killed the otter, and seized the salmon—a large and splendid fish—a welcome capture; for the gods were hungry and had been looking about for something to eat.

Entering a farmer's cottage hard by, they said to the farmer, 'You see that we have brought our food with us; so you need provide us nothing; but we beg you to cook for us this salmon.'

The yeoman (Reidmar by name) was an adept in a sort of sorcery such as was practised by shrewd peasants in those days, and he had taught his magic art to his sons, the art whereby any one of them might transform himself at pleasure into a bird, a beast, or a fish, and afterward resume his original personality.

The yeoman's youngest son was named Otter; and this young man, as a piece of sport which was naturally suggested to him by his name, had playfully transformed himself on that day into an otter; and it was this otter (or both Otters in one) that Loki had killed!

The father flew into a passion at his son's death, and demanded of the divine trio the compensation known as 'the blood fine.'

The gods, feeling troubled at what they had unwittingly done, offered to pay a liberal mulct, and asked the enraged farmer to fix the amount.

The rustic's demand was grotesque.

'Stuff the otter-skin full of gold,' said he, 'and then cover the outside of the skin so thick with gold that, from head to tail, not a single hair on the otter's whole body shall be seen.'

To procure the needed amount of metal for this purpose, Loki caught a black dwarf named Andvari, and said to him, 'Give us every ounce of smelted gold ore that you possess, or I will choke the breath out of your body.'

The terrified dwarf gave up all his gold except a single ring. This ring he begged to keep, saying that if he were allowed to keep the ring he could use it as a talisman for creating more gold.

'No,' cried Loki, 'you shall not have it back.'

Whereupon the exasperated dwarf, in a fit of righteous wrath, swore an oath that both the confiscated gold and the talismanic ring should, from that day henceforth, prove a curse to any and every owner who should ever possess either the one or the other.

The gods kept Andvari's ring, but, in keeping it, they kept Andvari's curse with it, a curse never thereafter removed nor mitigated, but irrevocably destined, through a long series of tragic events, to be terribly fulfilled; and affording by its fulfilment a proof that, as among gods, so among men, an inevitable corruption of moral character follows as a natural consequence from an 'accursed thirst for gold.'

§ 34. SPECTRES OF THE DEAD.

A belief in ghosts, and that they haunt their grave-mounds, and may be consulted by the living for advice, is an old-fashioned notion which finds frequent illustration in the Eddaic songs.

Thus, in 'The Lay of Vegtam,' we are told that a vala (or prophetess) is wakened from her death-sleep by Odin, and is induced to narrate to him, at his entreaty, a long series of events—past, present, and future.

In 'The Lay of Hyndla,' we see that a similar 'wise woman' is roused from her tomb by the goddess Freyia, who questions the long-dead sorceress concerning the ancestry of Otto Heimski, (Freyia's husband) with a view to ascertain Otto's birthright to a heritage for which there was a rival claimant.

In the 'Incantation of Groa' (who, by the way, is not the same Groa that tried to extract the flint-stone from Thor's forehead) a mother is summoned from her grave, and is appealed to by her son—to whom she gives shrewd directions how to travel without danger; how to conquer in sea-fights; how to spurn captivity; and how to be proof against cold, against shipwreck, and against the wiles of women.

In the story of 'King Helgi and Queen Sigrun,' after the king dies, the sorrowing queen goes to the king's cairn, summons his spirit to open it for her, salutes her spectral spouse, enters into

his dank bed, and says to him, 'I shall sleep in thine arms, O my beloved, as if thou wert alive.'

And the king replies, 'A greater marvel shall never be known than this, that *thou*, a king's daughter and a king's wife, hast come down alive into my tomb to sleep in the arms of thy dead lord!'

From these citations, and from a multitude of similar proofs, an important conclusion is to be drawn: which is, that notwithstanding frequent Eddaic references to the spirits of dead warriors as feasting in Valhal; notwithstanding counter references to the spirits of the ordinary dead as dwelling in Hell; and notwithstanding now and then a reference to the spirits of the wicked as imprisoned with serpents in Nastrand; yet, in spite of all this varied necrology with which the Eddas abound, we find that in Norseland, whether the dead have died on battlefields, or in their beds, or on the gallows, yet for the great multitude of the dead their dwelling-place after death is neither Valhal, nor Hell, nor Nastrand; but is simply the barrow or mound in which the corpse has been laid.

Such was the popular opinion in the early and Eddaic days. The grave was regarded as the dead man's home, wherein the Norse fancy represented him as living a second life.

Though his slumber was tranquil and hallowed, yet it was not unbroken.

On the contrary, he was liable to be summoned forth by his survivors and to be consulted by them in great emergencies, especially in cases of threatened danger either to his family, to his clansmen, or to his country.

'The sleep that knows no waking' was not an Old Norse idea. And as a vivid illustration showing how the spirits of the dead were wont to respond to the summons of the living, I may point to the noble tale of 'The Awakening of Angantow.'

The particulars are weird.

The black dwarfs had forged in their cavernous smithy a celebrated sword named Tyrting which, having an enchanted blade, was capable of giving, at the slightest cut or scratch, a wound that would never heal.

This irresistible weapon had been buried with the hero Angantow, he being the warrior who had last wielded it in battle.

But all recollection that the sword had been buried in Angantow's barrow or cairn had faded from the minds of his clan; and the charmed weapon was for many years supposed to be hopelessly lost to the world.

Angantow had left an only child, a daughter not born till after her father's death. This sole heiress was Hervor, a maiden of heroic mould. She had been brought up in ignorance of her noble paternity, and not until she became a woman was she told that her sire was the celebrated Berserk warrior Angantow.

She then, with woman's wit, shrewdly guessed that the sword Tyrning had possibly been buried, twenty years before, in her father's tomb.

The story now becomes dramatic.

All alone, the undaunted maiden makes a long and perilous journey to her father's distant burial-place; finds the spot after great hardship; kneels at the moss-grown mound; begs her father's ghost to speak to her, to bless her, and to give her the sacred sword.

The dead hero awakes; greets his daughter; tells her how dangerous the weapon is, how the slightest misuse of it would be her destruction, and begs of her not to ask to be entrusted with so terrible a gift.

But the damsel, as brave as an Amazon, will take no denial.

Whereupon her father confesses that the sword is lying beneath his body, midway between his shoulders, and that the enchanted steel, instead of growing rusty in the grave-mound, has been kept in a living temper by a flickering fire that runs perpetually along its keen edge, from hilt to point.

The conclusion of this wild myth may be readily guessed: the sire gives his daughter the magic sword—and the heroic young woman lives to see a son of hers wielding the weapon with terrible effect against the enemies of the land.

§ 35. FIMBULWINTER.

Hyperborean Europe, in modern days, has been steadily growing colder, and is now consequently decreasing in population.

The Russian province of Archangel (according to the latest census) has lost ten thousand inhabitants in ten years, owing to migrations to milder climates.

The Samoyeds and other tribes of Siberia are suffering in the same way, and are seeking the same remedy.

In Greenland, the fossil remains of palms and other tropical trees and plants have been discovered, proving that the Arctic North was once as warm as the Equator now is.

Polar navigators are of opinion that Iceland, Sweden, and Norway, to say nothing of Nova Zembla and Spitzbergen, are noticeably less fertile and more uninhabitable at the present day than these same climes were during the Middle Ages.

In fact, many scientific predictions now point to the gradual coming on of a glacial period which, in thermometric severity, is to be a reproduction of the original Great Ice Age; as if Nature, like History, must 'repeat itself.'

Whatever may be the scientific basis of a forecast which looks to the ultimate freezing out of civilization throughout the Upper North, the idea is not new or modern: it was held by our Norse forefathers: it is expressed in the Norse mythology.

The icy harbinger of the end of the world (according to the Eddas) is to be what is called 'Fimbulwinter.'

This quaint word, which seems, when spoken, to muffle the tongue—as if the mouth were suddenly lined with wool—has an ominous signification.

'Fimbul' is great or mighty; and 'Fimbulwinter' is the great and mighty winter which (as the Eddas predict) is to be of three years' duration, without an intervening summer: a winter consisting therefore of *three winters in one*, and which, at its close, will be immediately followed by Ragnârok, the Day of Doom.

In other words, 'Fimbulwinter,' with its three years of frost, will culminate in the final conflagration which is to put an end to the present terrestrial system of things.

What a grim antithesis of cold and heat! Mankind are thus mythically forewarned that the earth which they inhabit was originally so badly built that it can now no longer endure the strain of its own bleak climate!

And so this mundane sphere, a failure from the beginning, and meriting a magnificent and total destruction, is first to be benumbed by universal frost, as a prelude to being immediately afterward consumed by universal flame!

§ 36. THOR AND THE DWARF ALVIS.

With great indignation, Thor the Thunderer, whose temper is violent, learns that his fellow-gods, as a piece of pleasantry, during his absence from Asgard, have promised his daughter in marriage to the dwarf Alvis, one of the little gnomes who live underground.

This bit of fun is taken by the serious dwarf in solemn earnest, and he insists that the gods shall fulfil their pledge and give him the maid to wife.

Her furious father, when informed of the jest, hurries down to the door of the dwarf's cave, summons the pigmy forth from his hiding-place, threatens to pinch him to powder for his presumption, and rails at him, saying, 'You pug-nosed midget, a pretty bridegroom you would make for a daughter of mine!'

The trembling dwarf begs the Thunderer not to break the plighted faith of all the gods.

'But I was away, fighting the frost-giants, when this ridiculous match was proposed; I was not consulted; the gods have jested with you; they have made you their laughing-stock, you little hunchback!'

'Prithee,' cried the black dwarf, 'do not refuse me the snow-white maid!'

'Well then,' rejoined Thor, 'since your name is All Wise, I will give you a chance to exhibit all your wisdom; for I hereby promise that if you correctly answer all my questions, without making a single blunder, you shall have my daughter in marriage.'

Whereupon Thor, who now himself begins to enter into the humour of the jest, puts to the dwarf a long series of pedantic queries, such as, 'What are the different names of the earth? of the sky? of the sun, moon, stars?' &c.—the one and only object of these irrelevant interrogations being to detain the dwarf above ground until daybreak.

Eager to show his knowledge, the dwarf unwittingly oversteps his time, and is consequently turned into stone; for it was believed in Norseland that a cave-dwelling gnome who ventured to stay above ground till the break of day would be at once transmuted by petrification into a black and ugly rock for ever.

§ 37. THE THREE SWAN-MAIDENS.

Among the tribe called the Niars (in Sweden) dwelt three brothers, Volund, Slagfit, and Egil, who were sons of a king of Finland.

Being fond of hunting, they established themselves, one winter, in a hunting-lodge in Ulfdal, and they daily scoured the country on snow-shoes in pursuit of wild game.

To the lake-side where their lodge stood, there came three swan-maidens, or fairy damsels with swan-like wings.

These three beautiful females, Orlun, Hervor, and Latgund, were sisters.

The three brothers married the three sisters, thus—

Egil took Orlun;

Slagfit took Hervor; and

Volund took Latgund.

Happiness for a while blessed the three couples; but marriages, alike in myth and in reality, 'gang aft a-gley.' The swan-wives remained contented for seven winters. Then, during the eighth they pined, and in the ninth they fled away.

Two of the husbands (Egil and Slagfit) went off in search of the truants; the third (Volund, who had married Latgund) stayed at home, hoping for his wife's voluntary return.

But none of the swan-wives ever came back to Ulfdal, where Volund was left to live alone, and where, in order to fight off his melancholy, he built a smithy in which he worked so cleverly that reports of his skill finally reached the ears of the king.

Moreover, these rumours informed his avaricious majesty that the cunning smith was specially expert in gold-beating, and had gradually converted all his wealth into a series of gold rings (these being a species of current coin).

Accordingly, one day, in Volund's absence, his smithy was surreptitiously visited by King Nidad, who counted 700 gold rings, all grouped together on a rod.

The king secretly took off from the rod a single ring in token of his visit, leaving the 699 untouched.

Volund, on coming back, counted his rings, and discovered that one was missing.

On learning who had dared to play such a trick upon him, he was offended at the king's intrusion, and angrily threatened to quit the country, and to seek for some safer retreat where the profits of his labour would not be filched from him by a king's greed.

Then King Nidad said to Queen Cynrig, 'What a loss it would be to us if this incomparable workman should go away! We could never find his equal! How shall we prevent him from escaping?'

'*Hamstring* him,' replied the cruel queen, 'and he then will be unable to run off.'

Volund, after being hamstrung, took a twofold revenge on King Nidad and Queen Cynrig: first, he decoyed their two young sons—mere lads—into his smithy, where he at once cut off their heads and made their skulls into drinking-cups for the royal table; and next, he beguiled the marriageable daughter of the royal pair into a secret *liaison* with himself, whereby the princess was soon found to be with child.

Volund was then condemned to death, but just as his execution was about to take place in the palace-yard, he astonished the king, queen, and court, by unfolding and flapping a pair of wings which he had secretly inserted in his shoulders, and though he could not run, being hamstrung, he flew away, laughing derisively at the astonished crowd beneath.

§ 38. GRETTI AND GLAM.

A farm-house was haunted; it was full of noises in the night; a rafter would creak and groan; a chair or a table would fall to pieces, as if smashed; and sometimes, in the adjoining cow-shed, the horns of a heifer would be snapped off, or the tail of a colt jerked out (like that of Tam o' Shanter's mare).

The farmer, in much trouble of mind, laid the case before his neighbours for their advice.

'All this mischief,' they replied, 'is the work of an evil ghost named Glam, who haunts our whole valley, and we must have him punished.'

'But how?' demanded the farmer.

'Send for Gretti the Strong,' quoth they, 'and let him come and fight the imp.'

So Gretti the Strong, a stalwart clotpoll as huge as a Jotun, was sent for, and came in haste on horseback.

During the first night, nothing happened; during the second, the ghost Glam stalked into the stable and lamed Gretti's horse; during the third, while Gretti was lying at full length on the cottage-floor before the embers, with a hearth-rug over his limbs,

feigning to be asleep, the ghost suddenly glided in, and tried to snatch off the rug.

Gretti held it with a tight grip.

The two then pulled and tugged at the coarse blanket until, between them, it was rent in twain, each holding half.

The ghost, angry at being balked, exclaimed, 'Let me once push you out of doors into the open night-air, and you will not foil me in this way.'

[For, as the reader perhaps knows, the power of goblins is weakened and thwarted in a house where coals of fire happen to be glowing on the hearth.]

A terrible tussle ensued, the ghost trying to drag the swinker to the door.

But Gretti the Strong proved worthy of his name: he wrestled with the ghost, got him down, pounded him, and would have broken every bone in his body, if a ghost had bones.

Gretti finally wrenched off the ghost's head, and jammed it against the ghost's right leg.

[For it was well known that if a ghost's head were suddenly twisted off from his shoulders, and were at once stuck fast to some other part of his filmy frame, especially to one of his hips or thighs, his power for mischief was gone for ever.]

§ 39. FRODI'S PEACE.

Just as France once had a mythical King Pharamond, so also Denmark once had an equally fabulous King Frodi.

During the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus, all Europe, for the third time in 700 years, was free from war.

This was the epoch when King Frodi is supposed to have reigned over the Danes; and as his ignorant but happy people, glad of a cessation of bloodshed, gave to their own king rather than to a foreign emperor the credit of having brought about the universal tranquillity, they called it 'Frodi's peace.'

§ 40. FRODI'S MILL.

There is an additional myth concerning King Frodi.

He had two bondmaidens of great strength, Fenia and Menia; to whom he set the task of grinding at a mill.

At first he treated them well, and they served him willingly.

He had great reason to be gratified with their grinding, for they ground out for him, from their magic mill, not only a binful of gold, but other and more precious grists—especially two.

One was sweet sleep, and the other robust health.

Soon, however, Frodi began to be greedy for the grinding out of still greater blessings; and he selfishly overtaxed his bondslaves, saying to them, 'Stick to your task-work! Grind, grind, grind! Keep the mill going day and night! Sleep no longer than the length of a cuckoo's song!'

This piqued the mighty maidens, who fell to grinding, first with sullenness, then with spite, and finally with rage; until Frodi found to his horror, and too late, that Fenia and Menia had ground out for him a curse upon his tyranny, a war against his kingdom, and an end to his kingship.

Nor were the revengeful bondwomen yet content.

'Let us grasp the handles harder still!' cried Fenia and Menia: and they then ground so fiercely that the millstones flew to pieces and the mill came down with a crash.

There is a variation of this story to the effect that these same mill-maidens are still grinding at Frodi's mill, and that their endless task is to grind out all the salt which is needed for salting all the seas of all the world.

§ 41. NAGLFAR, OR THE NAIL-SHIP.

Some expositors find in certain obscure Eddaic phrases the odd notion that Loki (or the Devil), when he shall finally come to play his part in the world's destruction, is to approach by sea, in the character of a Viking, standing on the prow of a dragon-ship; and this mythic vessel (they tell us) will not be built of wood nor iron; nor will it be plated with shields hung round it, after the ancient style of Roman triremes; but it will be coated with horny armour made of the nails of dead men's fingers and toes!

This uncanny ship is to carry Loki, together with his fellow-conspirators; namely, the Fenris-wolf, the Hell-witch, the dog Garm, and other monsters, to join Surt and the fire-fiends for the burning of the world.

The Midgard-serpent, being a water-snake, may be presumed to need no passage on board this (or any) vessel, but will pass to Ragnârok in the form of a 'leviathan of the deep.'

§ 42. THE MYTHIC COCKS.

Chanticleer was a favourite emblem with the old skalds.

They associated him with Ragnârok.

This was natural: for as he was the bird of dawn, always heralding each new day, why should he not also herald the final morning of all—the Day of Doom?

Accordingly, in the Eddas, three mythic cocks—one on earth, one in hell, and one in heaven—will simultaneously crow to usher in the predicted *Dies Irae*.

These birds are—

First, a red cock named Fialar, who shall waken mankind throughout the earth;

Second, a black cock (soot-coloured), who shall waken the dead throughout hell; and

Third, a gold-combed cock (Gulinkambi), who shall waken the gods throughout heaven.

Prof. R. B. Anderson has neatly pointed out that the cock is the symbol of fire, and he says: 'The idea then is that the cock, as a symbol of fire, announces the coming of Ragnârök, in all the regions of the world.' And he adds: 'It is even to this day a common expression among the Norsemen, when a fire breaks out, that the red cock is crowing over the roof of the house.'

§ 43. THE ADVENTURES OF SIGURD THE VOLSUNG.

The story of Sigurd and Brunhilda—or, in other words, of the fatal feud between the Volsungs and the Niflungs—is known in all modern literatures, and owes its wide repute to the mediaeval German poem called the *Nibelungen-Lied*.

This Swabian Epic has been the fruitful theme of painters, sculptors, musicians, and bards.

But the original story, in its earliest or northernmost rendering—that is, as we find it in the elder Edda—is superior to its later amplification in Southern Germany.

Says James Sime: 'Brunhilda is certainly less impressive in the *Nibelungen-Lied* than in the Norse poems.'

'Suffice it to say,' writes Edmund Gosse, 'that in no modernized or Germanized form does the legend attain such an exquisite colouring as in these earliest fragments of the Icelandic song.'

To these critical testimonies many others could be added, all showing a striking preference for the Sigurd and Brunhilda of the Eddas.

The principal incidents of the Eddaic tale are these:—

Sigurd, a young demi-god, or more than a mere human hero, dedicates his first ambition to the sacred duty of avenging the murder of his father Sigmund, King of the Volsungs.

Then, in due time, having slain his father's slayer, the young avenger, not content with merely inheriting the crown, sallies forth in the spirit of a knight-errant (yet alone, and without a squire) in search of such heroic adventures as shall win for his personal courage a celebrity equal to his royal rank.

His first exploit, like that of lesser warriors, must be, of course, to fall in love.

The maiden is Brunhilda.

She too is of a superhuman type, for she is a Valkyrie (or war-angel).

Having on one occasion offended Odin by showing kindness to some of his enemies during a battle, she was rebuked by him for thwarting his wishes, and was sentenced by him to a temporary punishment of a very romantic kind: a very picturesque penalty: for he doomed her to undergo, during a brief season, an enchanted sleep on a bleak mountain-side in the frosty North; that is to say, he transformed her for a while into a block of ice.

While Brunhilda lay thus asleep upon the cold mountain, Sigurd

chanced to ride by; and here is the real beginning of the romance.

He halts, but does not at once dismount.

The young knight-errant, in gazing from his saddle at the prostrate figure of the frozen maid, imagines, for a few moments, that she is nothing but a portion of the earth's winter-crust, a beautiful piece of frost-work, a statue of ice, instead of a sentient being.

But Sigurd's horse Grani makes no such mistake, for the wise steed sniffs the air and paws the ground; in fact, Grani is a horse of the Homeric pattern, and possesses divine intelligence; where-upon his rider, suspecting some mystery, leaps down from the saddle, scans the sleeping image, feels a thrill in peering at it, and says to himself, 'Did ever a mere glacier so resemble a goddess? Here is more than frost-work! Here is sorcery! Here is magic! For surely this magnificent figure is more than a mere accident of Nature.'

Drawing his sword 'Gram,' which was an enchanted blade, and which, like Ithuriel's spear, could test the truth or falsity of whatsoever it touched, Sigurd cleft open the icy corselet of the slumbering maiden, and she suddenly awoke.

The wooing was of a heroic kind.

When Sigurd begged Brunhilda for an exchange of troth-plight, she answered, 'Though thou be indeed the King of the Volsungs, yet I have sworn an oath to wed no prince or sovereign save he be more than royal; for he must first prove himself to be the bravest hero ever born in the world. And the test of his courage shall be this. Hark to what I tell thee: I dwell in a tower which is girt round with a flame of unquenchable fire; and only he who is the bravest of mortals—he and no other—will dare to ride through it; so if thou, O Sigurd, shalt come galloping to me through the perilous flame, thee and thee only will I wed.'

Accepting these strange terms of troth-plight with the ice-clad Valkyrie, Sigurd rode away from her, resumed his quest of fame and fortune, and daily performed some valiant deed.

Meanwhile Brunhilda, waiting for the return of her lover, sat every day in her enchanted chamber, looking forth from her window, and keeping her white fingers busy at her favourite task, which was to depict in embroidery each new exploit of Sigurd's whereof the rumour reached her from the outer world.

During this period of Brunhilda's day-dreaming (the happiest period, as it proved, of all her life), she was residing in the palace of her foster-father, King Hymer, the husband of Brunhilda's sister, Benchchild.

Benchchild has no part in the tale, and King Hymer has but little.

Brunhilda, who on returning from the ice-mountain to the fire-tower has told no one of her clandestine interview with Sigurd, continues to sit by her window—embroidering, watching, and waiting.

Thus, day by day, in 'maiden meditation' though not 'fancy free,' she asks herself, 'When will he come?'

Meanwhile, her absent young hero performs a crowning exploit, by which he not only proves his supreme courage, but also acquires fabulous wealth.

Sigurd's celebrated adventure in acquiring this treasure is a somewhat complicated episode, and constitutes a tale by itself: for the treasure was nothing less than the famous hoard of gold which the dragon Fafnir guarded on Gnita Heath.

Our Appendix has already given the story in part, but other particulars now remain to be told.

§ 44. SIGURD AS A DRAGON-SLAYER.

The three gods, Odin, Hœnir, and Loki (as the reader will remember), had to pay to a farmer named Reidmar a 'blood fine' for killing his son Otter. Loki forcibly procured the necessary gold from the dwarf Andvari, who put a curse upon it because the greedy gods took all he had, and would not leave him even his talismanic ring Andvarinaut by which he could make more gold.

The 'blood fine' made the peasant so rich that his two remaining sons, Regin and Fafnir, conspired against their father and slew him for his wealth.

The two brothers then quarrelled, the miserly Fafnir refusing to give Regin any share of the spoil.

Fafnir, in fact, clings so tenaciously to the gold, that in order to guard it against all comers he turns himself into a grim dragon or python, and lies upon the treasure, watching it with a serpent's wiliness day by day and night by night.

Regin (Fafnir's brother) was a humpbacked dwarf; not indeed one of the underground gnomes who could not work in the daylight; for, on the contrary, it was Regin who had made for Sigurd the enchanted sword 'Gram' by which the young Volsung had won all his victories; an edge so fine and sharp that it would sever a gossamer that floated against it in the air, or would cleave asunder a wisp of wool that drifted against it in a stream.

Regin appealed to Sigurd for help against Fafnir, an appeal which the generous champion could not refuse to the maker of his invincible sword.

Accordingly, we next see the two friends, Sigurd and Regin (the one a colossus, the other a pigmy), going forth together to Gnita Heath where Fafnir, who awaits their approach, puts on his terrible 'aegis helm' by which he becomes a crested snake.

But Sigurd is not to be intimidated; it is only Regin who is afraid.

The cowardly hunchback, after having cautiously pointed out to his champion the way to the dragon's slot or pit (where the gold lay hid), dared not remain to see the fight, but ran off and skulked

behind a thorn-bush, where he crouched in the shade, trembling in every limb.

Fafnir the dragon, as he writhes in his agony from the deep cut of Sigurd's fatal sword, cries out, 'O Sigurd, thou hast proved thyself the bravest mortal ever born. But the gleed-red gold which thou hast won from me shall prove thy bane ; for there is a curse upon it, and the curse shall abide upon it till the world ends. Meanwhile, with my dying breath, I counsel thee to slay my cowardly brother Regin ; for in like manner as he has betrayed *me*, so also will he betray *thee*, unless thou slay him !'

Regin, who had skulked away too far to hear Fafnir's last words, waited till after the dragon lay stark dead before venturing to approach the gold-pit.

At last, while Sigurd is wiping his sword Gram on the grass. Regin returns.

'Hail to thee, Sigurd !' cries the obsequious dwarf, bowing his little head to the earth, 'thou art the first of swordsmen, and yet except for the sword which I made for thee thou couldst not have slain the beast.'

'Regin, thou coward !' quoth Sigurd, 'thou didst sneak out of my sight and leave me alone with the venomous serpent, who might have killed me for aught thou couldst foresee ; so I have proved thee a poltroon ; thou art not to be trusted, I despise thee.'

Giving no heed to this reproach, which he takes as a jest, the dwarf rubs his tiny hands with glee, draws a poniard from his girdle, cuts out his brother Fafnir's heart, and gives it as a tid-bit to Sigurd to eat.

'I will not eat it raw,' replies Sigurd.

Whereupon the dwarf collects a few faggots, strikes a flint, and begins to roast the heart, holding it close to the coals from the end of a stick.

Sigurd, to try whether the morsel is sufficiently roasted, touches it with his finger, and puts his finger to his tongue.

A single drop of the heart's juicy blood, which is thus conveyed into Sigurd's mouth, enables the taster at once to comprehend the language of birds.

A few ravens, that are perched above Sigurd on an oak-tree, are cawing to each other ; and every word they say becomes now as plain to Sigurd's comprehension as his native speech.

'Yonder,' quoth one of the ominous birds, 'is Regin, meditating mischief against Sigurd.'

Quoth another, 'Though Regin be a dwarf, and already the shortest of little men, yet Sigurd must make him still shorter by a head.'

And a third added, 'Yea, verily, Regin will kill Sigurd, if Sigurd kill not Regin !'

Warned by these oracles, which all confirmed Fafnir's own dying injunction, Sigurd slays Regin, binds all the golden treasure on Grani's back, and attempts to lead the heavy-laden horse away.

But no! the noble stallion, unwilling to see his master walk, will not stir a step until Sigurd mounts him! whereupon Sigurd leaps into the saddle, and slowly rides off with the ponderous golden hoard.

And whither will he go?

Sigurd has but one thought, which is, to go straight to Brunhilda, to lay his treasure at her feet, to make her his wife, and to crown her his queen.

But fate orders otherwise; and Sigurd, while on his way with his rich burden to Brunhilda's tower, is ceremoniously and with grand acclaim invited to pause in his journey for a brief rest and refreshment at the ancient palace of King Giuki and Queen Grimhild (the king and queen of the Niflungs).

Sigurd, whose horse is weary, accepts the invitation; for the Niflungs up to this time had shown none of that enmity to the Volsungs which was afterward to break out into a famous war.

Sigurd, the Volsung king, finds himself warmly welcomed at the Niflung court, where he is admired as a head taller than any other personage in the palace.

The plot now begins.

Queen Grimhild whispers to her husband, 'Why should not this rich and handsome young king of the Volsungs marry our daughter Gudrun? True, he is betrothed already to Brunhilda; this is a secret which I have wormed out of him, but this is a marriage which I shall prevent him from making. I will brew for him a magic drink. He shall forget Brunhilda, and shall wed Gudrun!'

From this point, thence onward to the end of the long story, Gudrun becomes a no less commanding figure than Brunhilda; for the crowded romance is, in fact, a tragedy with two heroines instead of one.

Queen Grimhild's first manœuvre is to make a sworn compact of friendship and amity between Sigurd on the one hand, and her three sons on the other, a covenant whereby the young king of the Volsungs pledges himself to maintain a perpetual alliance with these three Niflung princes, a treaty not of politics but of comradeship; in other words, Sigurd bound himself by oath to aid and defend these three young brothers, Gunnar, Ogni, and Guthorm, always and everywhere, exactly as if he, Sigurd, were their own veritable brother by birth.

Meanwhile, toward Brunhilda the Valkyrie (the sacred maiden in her fire-walled tower) the heart of Sigurd, her betrothed lover, went forth with longings unutterable. He was impatient of his brief stay at the Niflung palace. He resolved to quit at once, and hie to Brunhilda.

But as already a great feast in Sigurd's honour had been announced by the king and queen of the Niflungs, Sigurd must in courtesy remain at their palace till this magnificent occasion should be over.

So he said to himself, 'To-night, the banquet! to-morrow, Brunhilda!'

At the beginning of the festivities, Queen Grimhild filled a goblet with enchanted wine, gave the treacherous draught to the unsuspecting guest, and said to him, 'Great joy, O Sigurd, we have in thy presence here! Drink and be honoured; we all drink with thee!'

Sigurd drank.

Then, all in a moment (so cunningly had the drink been brewed), it blotted out from Sigurd's mind all memory of Brunhilda and of his betrothal to her; so that instead of thinking of Brunhilda, Sigurd now thought of nothing but the beauty of Gudrun, the Niflung princess.

With craft and skill the queen-mother speedily brought about her daughter's betrothal and espousal.

It was a marriage that vastly profited the Niflung dynasty by making the king of the Volsungs its all-powerful ally.

But the queen-mother's ambition was not yet satisfied; she devised a still further scheme. No sooner were the nuptials of her daughter with Sigurd concluded than Queen Grimhild said privately to Prince Gunnar, her eldest son, 'It now remains for thee, my son, to make as good a match as thy sister has done: *she* has wedded the richest of men; and *thou* shalt wed the fairest of women!'

'But who is this paragon?' asked Gunnar.

'Who else can it be,' was the reply, 'than the Princess Brunhilda of the fire-clad tower?'

'But,' exclaimed Gunnar, 'O wise mother, how shall this impossible marriage be brought to pass?'

'Through the help of Sigurd,' answered Grimhild; 'for as Sigurd, O my son, is bound by oath to aid thee in all thy plans, so must he aid thee in this as in all the rest!'

Gunnar, nothing loth for the adventure, sets out on his wooing. It is a memorable journey. He does not go alone, but is accompanied by his brother Ogni and by Sigurd. All three gallop together, Sigurd riding his horse Grani, and carrying his sword Gram.

From a psychological point of view we are interested to note, just here, that the magic drink of Queen Grimhild's brewing is now no longer operative on Sigurd's mind and memory; his brain at last is clear; he knows what he has done, and what he is doing; and during all the journey he is agonized as he remembers Brunhilda—her beauty, his oath of betrothal to her, and his once sure and happy hope of making her his queen. But, O woful fate! Sigurd already has a wife, the fair Gudrun! And, moreover, he has made with his wife's three brothers a sworn pact which now binds him to help Gunnar in suing for Brunhilda's hand!

'It is the will of the Norns!' thought Sigurd. 'What mortal can

foresee his fate? Brunhilda, who is still waiting for me, will curse me! and yet I have been no traitor, I have been only a blind victim to the higher powers! Gunnar will wed Brunhilda, and I shall suffer grief and torment throughout the rest of my life!’

Approaching Brunhilda's tower, the three riders saw it looming up, its walls unscorched and unscarred, yet wrapt in living and unapproachable flame.

Gunnar well knew that to reach Brunhilda he must ride through this ominous fire. He did not lack the nerve, for he had a dauntless spirit. But his terrified horse backed away from the glare and heat. Gunnar pricked him agen and agen, but the frightened steed refused to respond to the spur. At length, baffled but still eager, Gunnar cried out to Sigurd, ‘My horse fears the blaze. Thou hast sworn to help me: so now exchange horses with me; let me ride Grani.’

Gunnar mounts Grani; but Sigurd's faithful charger, feeling a strange rider on his back, refuses to stir a step, in spite of Gunnar's utmost urging.

A clever stratagem is now devised by Sigurd and Gunnar in order to overcome the horse Grani's obstinacy; first, each rider remounts his own horse, Sigurd striding Grani, a fact which Grani knows and feels; next, Gunnar and Sigurd, each now on his own horse, make an exchange of physiognomies, each rider taking the other's countenance, a fact which the horse Grani does not know nor suspect.

Sigurd, wearing the face and look of Gunnar, spurs Grani who, feeling his true master to be now in the saddle, gallops at once through the flame, not a hair of his mane being singed.

Brunhilda's tower is safely entered by Sigurd, who presents himself before her with due homage; but the bewildered maiden, not recognizing him in his transformation, supposes him from his face to be a stranger.

‘Who art thou?’ she asks; not knowing that she is speaking to Sigurd himself.

‘I am Gunnar, King Giuki's son and heir, and am come to ask thy hand in marriage,’ replied Sigurd.

In her increasing perplexity Brunhilda replies, ‘Prince Gunnar, speak not to me thus! It is to Sigurd that I am pledged; for it is he, and he alone, the bravest man of all the world, who has my troth-plight.’

‘Art thou not bound by oath,’ asked Sigurd, ‘to wed the one and only warrior who shall have proved himself able to ride to thee through the flame?’

‘Yea, verily, I am thus bound,’ quoth she; ‘but art thou he indeed?’

‘Behold,’ quoth Sigurd, ‘I am he! Keep thou thy plighted troth! I claim thee for my wedded wife from this hour.’

During this interview King Hymer (Brunhilda's foster-father)

was unluckily absent from home; and accordingly Brunhilda, having no one but her own love-loyal self to consult, replied, 'I know not what the Norns intend; thy coming is a mystery; but I will be true to my troth, and I hereby give thee my hand in marriage, for thou hast ridden to me through the fire-wall.'

Whereupon she bade her maidens prepare the bridal-couch.

Then, during three successive nights, Sigurd and Brunhilda lay in the darkness upon this bridal-couch side by side, the naked sword Gram lying between them, its magic blade gleaming with living light.

During the third night, Brunhilda asked of her bridegroom, 'Why doest thou this strange thing?'

'Because,' replied Sigurd, 'it is so risted in the runes, it is so decreed by the Norns! If I do it not, I die; and if I do it, I die!'

On the fourth morning, the bridegroom said to the bride, whom he had not once held in his arms, 'I go away, farewell!'

Then, without speaking to her another word, he mutely exchanged rings with her and departed.

The ring which Sigurd gave Brunhilda was the famous 'Andvarinaut,' the self-same talismanic ring which Loki had refused to restore to the dwarf Andvari, and which Andvari in revenge had cursed.

On King Hymer's return, Brunhilda said to her foster-father, 'O my father, whilst thou wert away, the young Prince Gunnar rode hither through the fire, and bade me fulfil my oath. I had thought that no man could venture hither to claim me in marriage save Sigurd alone. But the Norns have willed otherwise. So I lay on the bride-bed for three nights with Prince Gunnar. But a drawn sword lay each night between us, nor were we twain made one flesh, nor did my husband give me a spousal kiss. Then, on the fourth morning, saying to me nothing but farewell, and exchanging rings with me, he rode away. Nor have I seen his face since then.'

Brunhilda showed her father her wedding-ring; but she did not tell him, for she did not herself know or suspect, that this ring was none other than the magic ring 'Andvarinaut,' which had a curse upon it, and which was to work woe to whomsoever should possess the unhallowed thing.

King Hymer, partaking of Brunhilda's trouble of mind, resolved that for the sake of Brunhilda's name and fame, her marriage with Prince Gunnar should not only be at once heralded to the world as a *fait accompli*, but should without delay be commemorated at King Giuki's palace by a wedding-feast in honour, not merely of the bride and bridegroom, but of the alliance of the Niflungs and the Volsungs.

Now comes the feast.

The dramatic situation is striking. Brunhilda, as the wife of Gunnar, meets Sigurd as the husband of Gudrun; so the

bewildered Brunhilda, on seeing her former lover, grows pale and ice-cold with jealousy, and she sickens nigh unto death. But she is brave, and utters no outcry. She sits at table amid the mirth-makers, and suffers unspeakable anguish of heart. All her old love and longing for Sigurd keep welling up within her like a hidden fountain that seeks a vent, but she denies herself a tear. She makes no sign of heart-break, nor even of surprise. She simply whispers to herself, 'The will of the Norns must be done.'

Sigurd is equally a sufferer. But he too must equally be silent. Nothing remains for him but to submit to the higher powers. He might fitly say to himself, in the subtle words of Byron—

'The thorns which I have reaped are of the tree

I planted: they have torn me, and I bleed:

I might have known what fruit would spring from such a seed.'

The tale of Sigurd and Brunhilda now runs into many particulars which must be here omitted from this brief digest; but mention must be made of one important incident that occurs in the sequel of the drama.

There are secrets which the human heart is powerless to keep. Love, like murder, will 'out.' Sigurd's love for Brunhilda, and his early betrothal to her on the frosty mountain-side, were in due time confessed by Sigurd himself to his wife Gudrun, to whom also he told all the particulars of the subsequent strange tale—how he had assumed the countenance of Prince Gunnar, and how the unsuspecting Brunhilda had thereby been tricked into a marriage contrary to her oath.

On hearing this confession from Sigurd, his wife Gudrun, proud of having secured the world's chief hero to be her husband, even as the result of fraud, had the vainglory one day to flaunt this revelation in Brunhilda's face.

Brunhilda was astounded, and at first could not believe the narrative, but Gudrun, to confirm it, produced as evidence of its truth the very ring which Brunhilda, on that memorable 'fourth morning,' had given to Sigurd in exchange for the ring 'Andvarinaut.'

Never until Gudrun thus gloatingly revealed the story, and thus triumphantly corroborated it, did Brunhilda once suspect that the hero who had ridden to her through the fire-wall, and who had lain at her side with a drawn sword between them, was not Prince Gunnar but King Sigurd himself.

After this revelation the romance rapidly develops into tragedy.

First of all, smitten beyond endurance with a prostrating fever, Brunhilda tosses upon her bed, refusing all food, all medicine, all solace.

Then, on rallying, she reproaches her husband Gunnar for the deception which he and Sigurd united to practise upon her; and she cries out, 'I cannot and will not live!'

Gunnar (who fears that she will carry out her threat of suicide) begs Sigurd to go to her bedside, in order, if possible, to dissuade her from her purpose.

Sigurd, in his interview with the unhappy Brunhilda, goes so far as to say to her, 'If thou wilt, I will put away Gudrun and marry *thee*.'

Brunhilda nobly answers that such an act would be a crime against Gudrun.

'O Sigurd, Sigurd, nothing remains for me,' quoth the agonized Brunhilda, 'but to submit to fate!'

But Brunhilda's jealousy, of course, could not 'submit to fate,' for her Northern religion must, instead, have nothing short of revenge.

Brunhilda's revenge took a terrible and pathetic form: first she procured an assassin to slay Sigurd; and next, after Sigurd was thus slain, she immediately slew herself with her own hand: whereupon both the dead bodies—Sigurd's and hers—were burnt together on the same magnificent funeral-pyre.

The Eddas say that her last words were, 'Sigurd and I shall never part agen!'

And this skaldic prediction has come true; for these twain—Sigurd and Brunhilda—the most thwarted and unhappy pair of lovers who ever lived, have ever since their death been indissolubly knit together in poetry and song.

§ 45. GUDRUN'S THREE MARRIAGES.

If the reader feels a grudge against Gudrun, and calls her an unlovely heroine, there is at least *one* excuse for Gudrun's hardness—an excuse so strange as to be unique.

One day, shortly after her marriage with Sigurd (who, it will be remembered, had recently slain the dragon Fafnir), her husband gave Gudrun a morsel of Fafnir's roasted heart to eat.

She ate it, and thenceforth, throughout all her remaining days, the magic morsel not only continued to quicken her intelligence, but to intensify her will, rendering her, year by year, not only more and more sagacious and ambitious, but more and more relentless and masterful.

She too was thus (like Brunhilda) a victim of fate, rather than a creature of free will.

The long rôle which Gudrun plays in the Norse mythology extends through three royal (and miserable) marriages, as follows:—

Her first husband (as we have seen) was Sigurd, whose early assassination left her a young widow with an only child—as yet unborn; who proved to be a daughter named Swanhild, and who grew up to be the beautiful wife of King Jormunrek. This jealous and brutal king suspected Swanhild of infidelity, and caused her to be trampled to death under the hoofs of horses.

Gudrun's second husband was King Atli, whom the Swabian

form of the tale identifies with the historic King Attila the Hun.

But her marriage with Atli (as the Edda says) 'was not to her wish.' It was an affair of public policy, in order to give Atli a claim to Sigurd's gold.

The discontented Gudrun, after having borne to Atli two boys, named Erp and Eitel, killed them in their tender childhood, roasted their little hearts, and served the two morsels on one dish to their father, who unsuspectingly ate them as delicacies at his supper. Before Atli had quite finished his supper, Gudrun thrust a dagger into him, and while he was yet hardly dead, set fire to his palace and escaped to the realm of King Jonaker.

Gudrun's third marriage was with King Jonaker, to whom she bore three sons.

Meanwhile it was at King Jonaker's court that her daughter Swanhild (Sigurd's child), was being brought up.

'Of all my children,' said Gudrun, 'I loved Swanhild best; I clothed her in purple and gold; and woful was it to me to see her fair head trodden under the hoofs of steeds, and her bright hair trampled in the mire!'

After Swanhild's violent death, Gudrun, for vengeance on Jormunrek, summoned to her bower one day the three sons whom she had borne to Jonaker, and bade them, if they loved her, to go and avenge the murder of their half-sister Swanhild.

The fierce mother's suggestion proved sufficient.

Her sons, in carrying it out, not only set fire to Jormunrek's palace while he was feasting, but they cut off his hands and feet and flung them into the flames.

§ 46. GUDRUN'S DEATH.

Weary of life, and seeking to end it heroically (as Brunhilda had done), Gudrun ordered a costly funeral-pyre to be built for herself; and while it was building she sat by her palace window and calmly watched the workmen.

At this dramatic moment she sings an Eddaic song in which she sums up her long career, thus:—

'I have had,' she says, 'three homes, three hearth-fires, three husbands; but I have loved only Sigurd; and now, O Sigurd, be mindful of thy promise made to me at our marriage, that if thou shouldst die before me thou wouldst come back to me from the dead!'

Gudrun then mounts the funeral-pyre, orders it to be set aflame, and, in the midst of the blaze, cries out—

'O Sigurd, harness thy pale steed and come to me! Let thy fleet horse haste with thee hither! I am waiting for thee! Come, Sigurd, come!'

Thus did Gudrun die, giving in her death a proof of the life-long and imperishable power of a woman's first love.

§ 47. THE WAR BETWEEN THE NIFLUNGS AND THE VOLSUNGS.

After Sigurd's untimely death, the gold which he had won on Gnita Heath by killing the dragon Fafnir, became the coveted object of a violent dispute among rival claimants.

'It belongs of right,' said the Niflungs, 'to our royal house.'

'On the contrary, it belongs,' said the Volsungs, 'to ours.'

According to the Niflung view, the gold, though acquired by the sword of Sigurd the Volsung, yet became at Sigurd's death the just inheritance of his widowed queen Gudrun, the Niflung.

But according to the Volsung view, the death of the King of the Volsungs could not alienate his treasure from his kingdom, and the gold must still remain with the Volsungs.

There was a third view, the view taken by King Atli (Brunhilda's brother), who said, 'My sword is sharp, what if I seize the treasure for my own?'

Atli's threat settled the case.

Gunnar at once said, 'O Atli, remain at peace with us. Espouse my widowed sister Gudrun, who has a plain right to the gold. This marriage, if thou make it, will bind the Volsungs and the Niflungs for ever in amity and concord.'

So Atli, Brunhilda's brother, wedded Gudrun, Gunnar's sister.

This was the marriage to which (as we have seen) Gudrun was reluctant; it was 'not to her mind'; it was no love-affair of hers; it was nothing but a prudential scheme between Gunnar and Atli, which Gudrun herself had no power to avert: in fact she never gave even her nominal consent to it until she had first been drugged with an oblivious draught whereby, for the time being, Sigurd, her one and only love, was totally banished from her memory.

King Atli, in marrying Gudrun for the gold of Gnita Heath, came under the curse which always accompanied the gold. Indeed, Atli inherited the curse without even acquiring the gold; for the crafty Gunnar, distrusting the craftier Atli, concealed the treasure and would not make known its hiding-place. Atli resorted finally to a bold and cruel scheme for ascertaining the secret.

His plot was adroit.

'Gudrun,' said he, one day smilingly to his wife (whose hatred for him was intense, though he did not suspect it), 'let us have a friendly visit at our palace from thy two brothers, Gunnar and Ogni. Send and invite them hither! Write that they shall receive good cheer, together with gifts of soft raiment, bright armour, and ingots of silver; but say in thy message that if they do not come *now*, they shall never be bidden *again*.'

Queen Gudrun sent the summons; but, fearing that her fierce husband was plotting mischief against her brothers, she also secretly sent to them the ring 'Andvarinaut,' with a wisp of wolf's hair tied in it.

'Look,' said Gunnar to Ogni, 'this is a warning! Our sister has

been bidden to invite us; but she sends us, at the same time, a token warning us not to come. Now, if we stay away through fear, we shall be disgraced. So, whatever mischief may be brewing, let us go and meet it like brave men!

Go they did; and their going resulted in a swift succession of tragical events.

On the arrival of Gudrun's brothers at Atli's palace, their anxious sister Gudrun, who had warned them not to come, whispered to them, 'Ye are betrayed! Atli means to kill you! Flee for your lives!'

'It is too late,' replied Gunnar; 'we will stay!'

Atli, having seized the two brothers, and having separated them from communication with each other, said to Gunnar, 'Now that thou art a captive and powerless, wilt thou tell me, as the price of thy freedom, where Sigurd's treasure is?'

'No!' replied Gunnar, 'I will not tell thee.'

'Dost thou, O Gunnar, value the breath in thy body?'

'No! I am ready to die.'

'Wouldst thou, O Gunnar, save the life of thy brother Ogni?'

'Yea, verily! I would give my own heart's blood to save my brother from death.'

King Atli, finding how dearly Gunnar loved Ogni, now tried to practise upon this brotherly solicitude.

'Go with a knife,' said Atli, speaking with a loud voice to a henchman in Gunnar's hearing, 'go with a knife and cut out for me the heart of Ogni, and bring it hither on a dish for Gunnar to look at and to think upon!'

Now Atli, fancying that this cruel order would of itself be enough to overcome Gunnar's firmness, had meanwhile privately commanded that the heart which was to be cut out and brought on a dish should not be the heart of Prince Ogni, but that of a slave named Hialli.

The tale just here has a fine touch of pathos. The false heart, when brought in, only made Gunnar laugh with scorn at the attempted deception.

'See!' he cried, 'this heart quivers on the platter! It is not the heart of my brother Ogni: for my brother is no coward, and his heart, if cut out, would not tremble!'

Afterward the real heart, the heart of Prince Ogni, was brought to Gunnar, who groaned and said, 'This is indeed my brother's heart; it quivers a little in its bloody dish, but it never once quaked in its living breast!'

Whereupon Atli demanded anew, 'Where is Sigurd's gold?'

'Thou tyrant!' replied Gunnar; 'my brother Ogni knew, but thou hast slain him. And now no mortal knows save myself alone. The secret is safe with me. Even shouldst thou live to grow old, O Atli, thou shalt never learn where the treasure lies!'

Atli made one more attempt to break the spirit of the obdurate

captive, and to force a revelation of the whereabouts of the precious secret.

Gunnar was flung into a wattled pen of serpents, where, though his hands were bound, yet he played his harp with his *toes* (or 'the fingers of his feet'), and for a while so charmed the reptiles that they forbore to sting him; but when he could no longer keep up the music an adder bit him, and so King Gunnar died.

The skalds, to add a further touch of romance to the final scene, say that the last melody which Gunnar played on his harp in the serpent-pen, while awaiting his fate, was a love-lay to Odrun, a fair lady whom, after Brunhilda's death, he had sought in marriage, but whom he had sought in vain.

So it is seen that Gunnar died, having been disappointed in everything; and it is seen also that all his disappointments were in fulfilment of the dwarf Andvari's original curse upon the gold.

§ 48. GUDRUN AND HERKIA.

There is a Herkia in these legends, a concubine of King Atli.

After Gudrun was wedded to Atli there sprang up a fierce jealousy in the heart of the concubine against the wife; and in a fit of rage Herkia falsely accused the queen of a *liaison* with King Theodrek, a royal visitor at Atli's court.

Queen Gudrun haughtily demanded that her accuser and herself should each be put to the ordeal of the boiling cauldron.

The test was made in the presence of all the court.

Gudrun plunged her bare white arm up to the armpit into the boiling water, and was unscathed; but Herkia, in doing the same, was so scalded that she dropped dead.

§ 49. THE HOMES OF THE DEITIES IN ASGARD.

It has already been mentioned that Odin's private dwelling, which is not to be confounded with Valhal, or the hall of the slain, was Lidskaf; a silver-roofed villa at the top of the sky, or in the 'seventh heaven,' and overlooking the whole busy realm of mankind.

Thor the Thunderer was not always thundering; and so, in addition to his cloud-palace of Bilskirner (which was illuminated with 'electric light,' in the form of actual lightning), he had a quieter domicile called Trudvang, where, during calm weather, he laid aside his hammer and his gauntlets, forgot the frost-giants, and spent his sunshiny nights with his amiable and golden-haired spouse Sif. (Query: was Trudvang so named from Thor's daughter Trude?)

Uller was housed in Yewdale.

Frey, the only god who was born in Heaven, had an extensive 'landed property' on Earth, for we have already seen that, while he was yet a baby in his swaddling bands, the gods, all of whom were his 'godfathers,' gave him all Elfland for a 'tooth-gift.'

Saga, the goddess of history, dwelt in a house called Soquabec, which was a 'cottage by the sea.'

Balder and Nanna, whose earthly residence was the 'Nanna's Heim' of *Carl Olaf's Canticle*, had their heavenly home in Breidablik, in the bluest and brightest of skies.

Heimdall, the god of the rainbow, the watchman and warder of Asgard, dwelt at his post of duty, in a signal-station called the Tower of Himinborg.

Freyia, the Norse Venus, rivalled Odin's Valhal with her splendid parlour and guest-room known as Folkvang.

Forseti, the arbiter of disputes, held his court in Glitner, sitting like a judge *in camera*.

Vidar, the god of 'the forest primaeval,' had a sylvan retreat called Landvidi, which (says 'Grimner's Lay') was 'overgrown with branches and high grass.'

Niord, the hostage whom the vans gave to the gods, occupied in Asgard a residence known as Noatun, which was remarkable for its 'high-timbered altar-seat.'

Friga, the Norse Juno, had a glorious reception-hall which, for spaciousness, outdid even Odin's Valhal or Freyia's Folkvang; for 'Friga's Dome' is a comprehensive phrase for the whole canopy of the sky.

In addition to these principal homes of the Asgard divinities, it should be mentioned that the grand entrance to the Garden of the Gods, in other words, the gate of heaven, was called Valgrind.

§ 50. THE MYTHIC STEEDS.

The gods were fond, not only of fine houses, but of fast horses.

In fact, they needed horses of magic speed, in order to gallop without loss of time over Heimdall's bridge to the daily council at the Urdar Fount.

Odin's horse (as we have seen) was Sleipner, an eight-footed racer, representing the eight winds of the Northern heavens.

Frey rode usually a boar or *sanglier* called Gullinbursti (or 'golden-bristle'), but Frey is also mentioned as having a roan horse named Bloody-foot.

Heimdall's stallion was Gold-crest.

Among the various other equine names in Asgard we find Silver-top, Raven, Strong-sinew, Sunbeam, Lightfoot, Pale-hoof, Yellow-mane, and Glassy-glare.

Thor the Thunderer, who (as already stated) was not permitted either to drive, to ride, or even to walk upon Heimdall's bridge for fear of crushing the fragile structure, was compelled to content himself without a horse; so that whenever the mighty hammerer took a drive, it was with his modest team of goats.

Balder's steed was burnt on his master's funeral-pyre, on board the blazing ship Ringhorn.

The chariot of the sun was drawn by two horses called Alsvið and Arvak (or Fleet-foot and Wide-awake).

The divine genius of Night (the dark daughter of the swarthy giant Norvi) rode Rime-fax; while Delling (or the bright Day) rode Skin-fax.

Atli's horse was Gleam; and Helgi's was Strider.

With the single exception of Odin's eight-footed Sleipner, there was no horse in the Northland equal to Sigurd's Grani, the sagacious beast that bore the treasure from Gnita Heath, and that galloped through flames of fire to the Princess Brunhilda's tower.

§ 51. THE BURNT BOWSTRING.

As a prototype of Robin Hood or Little John, there was a Norse archer named Egil who could aim an arrow quite as well as any of the 'crack shots' of Sherwood Forest.

Egil's wife, Alruna, was a rich and proud beauty, whose long hair, when let down, reached to her feet.

One day Egil, in a domestic tiff, slapped his fair wife's face.

The injured lady, while smarting from the sting of the unmerited blow, replied, 'If I should live a thousand years, or even until Doomsday itself, never, O Egil!—no, never!—could I forget this insult; and you may be sure that sooner or later I shall have my revenge!'

'What harm can you hope to do to me?' asked her husband, who laughed at her angry threat.

'Wait and see!' quoth Alruna; 'you will repent your ruffianly act!'

A year or two then passed, during which Alruna made no further allusion to the subject; and Egil fancied that the wound to his wife's pride had been completely healed.

Not so!—for the rich dame was relentless in her grudge.

One night their house was suddenly beset by a prowling band of brigands or pirates who had landed from a dragon-ship on a raid for plunder.

Egil was no coward.

The skilful archer, with his well-aimed arrows, which he shot out through a loop in his house-wall, defended his home for an hour against the raiders; picking out and killing or wounding one man after another in swift succession, until at last from his quick and hot work his bowstring caught fire and snapped asunder.

This was to Egil an unexpected dilemma, and he happened to have no other bowstring at hand.

What could he do without a bowstring?

Nothing!

So turning to his wife, who had apparently been watching his skill with great admiration, he exclaimed, 'My fair Alruna, cut off for me a tress of your long hair and twist it for a string to my bow! This is my last hope!—my life depends upon it!'

Alruna did not stir.

'Make haste!' cried the impatient Egil; 'I must have a wisp of your hair for a bowstring!'

'Egil,' quoth she, 'I have not forgotten that you once slapped my face! The moment for my revenge has come at last! Does your life hang indeed, as you say, upon so slight a thing as the hair of my head? Well then, I will not cut off a single tress nor pluck out a solitary hair to save you from the punishment which you deserve! Let the brigands do with you what they will! The just gods have sent these Vikings to teach you the wholesome lesson that a brute of a husband—living on his wife's fortune—shall not be permitted to slap her face with impunity.'

§ 52. EDDAIC TROPES AND FIGURES OF SPEECH.

The Vikings were fond of extravagant metaphors and similes. The lyrics of their primitive skalds teemed with romantic designations of common things. Just a few of these many hyperbolic expressions will serve as specimens:—

'A steed of the sea'	meant a ship.
'Sea-arrows'	„ a shoal of herring.
'The blue meadow'	„ the wide ocean.
'The snake's joy'	„ the summer.
'The bear's night'	„ the winter.
'Odin's hat or helmet'	„ the sky.
'Freyia's tears'	„ gold coins.
'Long brush'	„ the fox.
'The cave of the voice'	„ the human mouth.
'The box for the bones'	„ the living human frame.

§ 53. WEREWOLVES.

A base-born son of King Sigmund the Volsung was Sinfetla, who, for a time, by his witch-mother's magic, was transformed into a werewolf; that is, into a man who, without losing his human and rational faculties, yet seemed to other men around him to be a wolf—having a wolf's skin, a wolf's teeth, and a wolf's howl.

The danger to a man thus bewitched was that he had to betake himself to the woods, where he was exposed to the chance of being hunted and slain as a veritable wolf.

Sinfetla was for a season thus hunted, though not slain, for he escaped death by reason of his great strength, joined to his high intelligence.

At last, on being released from the spell, he burnt his wolf-skin, and was recognized in his true personality as King Sigmund's son.

And who was Sinfetla's mother?

She was Signy, King Sigmund's sister.

This was a strange case of lycanthropy.

'I dallied with thee, one day, in the woods, as a witch,' said the royal sister to her royal brother, 'and Sinfetla is our royal son.'

§ 54. A RUSTIC'S READY WIT.

A Rambin sea-rover landed, one morning, in Jutland to forage in the farm-lands.

He and his crew stole from a farmer a fat ox, and after skinning and quartering their prize, and packing away the four huge pieces of fresh meat in the locker of their dragon-ship, they slyly hid the ox's head in a heap of straw resembling a rower's padded bench.

'Now,' said the leader of the thievish gang, 'let us have some sport with the farmer whose ox we have stolen. The stupid carl knows nothing of the theft. Bring him before me, and I will bewilder him with some merry questions.'

The despoiled farmer, on being brought before his despoiler, was accosted thus:—

'I am told,' quoth the Rambin pirate, 'that you farmers and cattle-breeders understand the language of birds. Now yonder, on an ash-tree, sit three cawing crows. My good simpleton, if you want to get home alive, sit down for a few minutes on this straw-covered rowing-bench, and oblige me with a specimen of your skill in bird-lore by cleverly interpreting what those noisy birds are saying; for I am curious to get at the meaning of their voluble chatter.'

Whereat the numbskull of a peasant, who was not such a fool as he looked, and who well knew what had become of his fat ox, replied craftily, 'Those three saucy crows are gossips not to be believed. The first is a this year's bird, too young to know *anything*, so he is not worth listening to. The second is a two-year-old, and thinks he knows *everything*, so he is of course daft and crazy. The third is a four-year rascal, who has grown to be so vicious and audacious, that he ought to have his neck wrung as a liar and slanderer; for he has the brazenness to tell me that *I* am sitting on an ox's head, and that *you* are a cattle-thief!'

This hit ended the colloquy; and the witty farmer was applauded and dismissed.

§ 55. ALE, BEER, AND MEAD.

In the Eddaic dialogue between the god Thor and the dwarf Alvis (see section 36) the Thunderer asks the Midget, 'What are the various names of that foaming beverage which is the delight of gods and men?'

The dwarf replies, 'It is called on earth, ale; in heaven, beer; and in hell, mead.'

In our common English idiom of to-day, the word 'mead' is as seldom heard as 'hydromel'; but 'ale' and 'beer' may be said (without too forced a jest) to be in everybody's mouth.

These two words, 'ale' and 'beer,' are merely different names for the same thing.

But even the bookwormiest etymologists at Oxford and

Cambridge, in tossing off their college-brewed 'beer' or 'ale,' do not always stop to reflect whether what they are quaffing is 'earthly' or 'heavenly'; and, in fact, it is sometimes, by growling grammarians (in a bad humour), critically complained of as 'hellish!'

§ 56. IS THE MOON INHABITED?

Yes, certainly!

At least, our silvery asteroid has long been known to be frequented by a total population of *one*; namely, 'the Man in the Moon.'

But the Norse mythology adds to this meagre census two other lunar inhabitants; for the man in the moon, or Mani, as he is called, finding himself lonesome, and desiring pleasant companions, one day whisked off from the earth a couple of good children named Bill and Yuki; who now dwell with Mani in the moon, where they make themselves useful to him by drawing water from a well, carrying a bucket between them without spilling a drop.

These two 'children of the man in the moon' typify what is often seen in the sky on a clear moonlight night, namely, one or two tiny stars close to the moon's edge.

§ 57. THE 'HAVAMAL.'

This is the title of a copious collection of proverbs or wise saws; but though this collection is contained in the elder Edda, yet as the 'Havamal' is simply ethical, and not mythological, it has no necessary place in these present pages.

§ 58. WHAT HAS BECOME OF THE GOLD?

'It was thrown into the Rhine,' say some.

'It was thrown into the Glommen,' say others.

Meanwhile, it is enough for our Appendix to say that though the hoard of Gnita Heath will never be found, yet it can never be lost; for it exists as an inalienable part of the whole world's treasure of poetry and romance. And in all probability, just as it has already served, during six or seven centuries, to warn mankind against the evil passion known as the *auri sacra fames*, so the same glittering myth—one of the most brilliant in all fiction—will go shining down through future centuries, serving always—

'To point a moral and adorn a tale.'

§ 59. LATER MYTHS, LEGENDS, LAYS, AND SAGAS.

A mere Appendix should not be prolix: so this synopsis must hasten to the great catastrophe of this mythology—which is Ragnârok, or the Day of Doom. But meanwhile a brief digression seems here requisite, just for the sake of reminding the reader that, at the outset of this sketch, I forewarned him to expect nothing but a digest; not at all a treatise; in fact only an epitome or glossary.

I have, therefore, purposely limited this compendium almost

exclusively to the elder or poetic Edda, without trying to include the great mass of the later or prose legends, chronicles, and multitudinous sagas: for my chief aim has been to convey a notion of the old Gothic myths in their primaeval originality, free from the revampings and doubtful 'improvements' done upon them in subsequent times.

But these Gothic myths, in *any* rendering (even in the Swabian), have a certain 'faded splendour' like that of Enid's old silk gown, which was all the more charming for being out of fashion and somewhat frayed.

In their still older (or Icelandic and primitive form) they are still more captivating, presenting to us a mythology which ranks as 'a good second' to the Greek, and which should no longer be omitted from any curriculum of the classic literatures of the world.

Meanwhile, if no adequate idea of the excellence of the Eddaic lore can be derived from this well-meant Appendix, the fault is not with the myths themselves, but with their present scribe, who has purposely, in this 'abstract and brief chronicle,' told as little as he could, rather than as much as he might. Such a compressed narrative may be bungled in the handling, but is wise in the design; for the design is, that this synopsis should not be a whole cyclopaedia. The sprightly author of the *Greek Vignettes* (Professor James A. Harrison of Virginia) says—

'So soon as you set to work to tell people *all* about a thing, you in reality tell them *nothing*: it is like looking for the fairy-ring in broad daylight.'

§ 60. RAGNÁROK, OR THE DAY OF DOOM.

As in a great public park all the various avenues, by-paths, and cross-roads have each an index-finger, guiding the rambler to the one grand exit, so in threading the mazes of the Norse mythology the student at every step, throughout the whole Eddaic poetry, is forewarned, as he goes along, that all these fables, allegories, and episodes point to a common and inevitable *dénouement*, which is Ragnârok.

What then is this strange and ominous word?

Etymologically it is compounded of 'Ragna' (the gods, or reigning powers) and 'Rökr' (the twilight).

The term 'Ragnârok' therefore is literally 'the twilight of the gods,' a metaphorical way of saying of the gods that their day is done, that their power is passing away, and that their doom is at hand.

So Ragnârok is Doomsday, a day which, as predicted in the Eddas, is in one respect analogous to the *Dies Irae*, *Dies Illa*, whereof Thomas de Celano said in resonant rhyme—

'Tuba mirum spargens sonum
Per sepulchra regionum,
Coget omnes ante thronum.'

But with the exception of the 'Tuba' (or trumpet) announcing the final conflagration of the world, there is little or no resemblance between the scriptural 'Day of Judgement' and the Norse 'Ragnârok.'

The one is Christian; the other, pagan; and the two accounts are widely divergent.

The salient features of Ragnârok, or the dramatic elements composing the Gothic 'Day of Judgement,' are the following :—

1. The locality of the final struggle of the gods with the fire-fiends will be the Plain of Vigrid; which is described in the Eddas as a battle-field a hundred 'rasts' (or miles) square.

2. The two opposite hosts will consist, on the one hand, of all the gods of Asgard combined with all the heroes of Valhal—this joint army being led by the Val-father Odin; while, on the other hand, the opposing force will consist of all the fire-giants, commonly known as the 'Sons of Muspel,' combined with all the evil powers of the lower world—the joint attacking army being nominally led by the fire-fiend Surt.

3. But the *real* leader of Surt's forces is Loki himself, who, though a god, nevertheless turns traitor to the gods, joins the brand-bearing Surt, and not only pilots the fire-fiends to the scene of battle, but concentrates upon the fatal field a grim cohort of other mighty monsters, including a few who are to be paired against the gods in single combat.

4. Notwithstanding the important mischief which Surt and his torches will do, Loki's chief confederates will not be the fire-fiends; for Loki will rely mainly on his own miscreant kith and kin, especially on his three demon-children; namely, the Fenris-wolf, the Midgard-serpent, and last (but not least) Hela the hell-witch who, though not herself a warrior, yet will contribute her hell-hound Garm, the fiercest monster of all.

5. Early in the morning, before the opening of the battle, Odin will first gallop on his eight-footed steed Sleipner to Meimer's Fount (the well of wisdom), where the anxious god will consult with the wise giant as to the best strategy against the fire-fiends.

6. Heimdal, who keeps the trumpet known as Gjallerhorn hidden among the boughs of the tree Ygdrasil, will draw forth from its hiding-place this

'Tuba mirum spargens sonum,'

and will blow upon it a blast at which the 540 doors of Valhal shall suddenly fly open, and from each door 800 Einheriar (or spirits of slain heroes) shall rush forth (making a cohort half a million in number) to join the gods.

7. Odin's plan of battle, as arranged for him by Meimer, will include a series of five single combats, a kind of supernal parallel to the romantic personal encounters between the Saracens and the

Templars ; for instance, like the duel of Saladin and Cœur de Lion. But there will be none of the courtesy and elegant chivalry which Sir Walter Scott has described. The paired adversaries at Ragnârök will be gods against monsters. There will be horror upon horror !

The programme of the fight is explicit, to wit :—

Odin, the Sun-god, will be pitted against the Fenris-wolf ;

Thor, the Thunder-god, against the Midgard-serpent ;

Frey, the Water-god, against the fire-fiend Surt ;

Tyr, the War-god, against the hell-hound Garm ; and finally

Heimdal, the Rainbow-god, against Loki, the most subtle foe to be feared by gods or men.

8. While these five separate duels are going forward, the tree Ygdrasil will creak and groan, suffering like a sentient creature ; for the Great Ash is intelligent ; it knows, not only that 'the powers are to perish,' but that it must itself perish with 'the powers' ; it will therefore, in due time, take cognizance of an ominous change which is to pass through all its roots, boughs, and leaves ; for the Norns will suddenly cease to sprinkle the 'Mundane Tree,' which must be made ready to become a prey to the world-destroying flames.

These flames, which Surt will kindle with his flambeaux, shall then consume Ygdrasil branch by branch, until the whole tree shall drop piecemeal into the ocean's boiling waves.

9. The Rainbow meanwhile (its arch being directly under the boughs of the Great Ash) will catch fire from the blazing tree, and will be shrivelled away, like the drying up of dew.

10. Though the gods are predestined to be massacred (a fate which they themselves foreknow) yet they will go to their deaths arrayed in all the splendour of their brightest armour, Odin wearing his most shining helmet—a circumstance indicating that the battle will culminate at high noon.

11. The five personal encounters, however wisely planned by Meimer, are to result in the following tremendous fatalities—

(1) Odin, in fighting the Fenris-wolf, is not only to be slain, but to be swallowed.

(2) Thor, whose antagonist is the Midgard-serpent, will succeed in killing the serpent, but will be so poisoned during the struggle by the monster's venom, that the conqueror, at the moment of victory, will stagger back nine paces and drop dead.

(3) Frey, through lack of the enchanted sword which he gave away for love of the maiden Gerd, will be overcome and slain by the fire-fiend Surt.

(4) Tyr, indomitable in spirit, yet crippled in body (having but one hand), will neither win nor lose against the hell-hound Garm, for each will slay the other.

(5) Heimdal likewise, in his fight with Loki, will kill and be

killed; both will perish; as if on purpose to show that, down to the very end of this present, imperfect world, good and evil will continue to counterbalance each other with the mutual evenness of exactly co-equal powers.

12. But though not one of the five fighting gods is to come off alive from the field of Vigrid on the Day of Doom, yet as soon as the battle is over, and while the world is yet on fire, a sudden transformation-scene is to take place, as in a fairy-tale.

A new actor comes at once into the drama.

The battleground receives a strange visitor. This is the god Vidar, who, not having been in the fight, has kept himself in reserve in order to surprise the victorious monsters, and to give them their *coup de grâce*.

It is a surprise indeed; and being the closing incident of Ragnârok, it deserves the reader's special attention.

The god Vidar is a unique and weird figure; a Rhadamanthus and Nemesis both in one. He comes upon the scene of the world's destruction a solitary champion without sword or shield, without helmet or mail.

His only armour or weapon, if armour or weapon it can be called, is a pair of thick, coarse shoes, or *sabots*, made of ironwood.

Shod with these, his feet are able to take a firm grip of the ground. He will neither slip nor slide. He can neither be pushed back, nor forced to budge an inch.

He is emblematical of the primaeval forest.

And what is he to do?

Though unwarlike, yet he is to conquer the conqueror of Odin!

Coming unlooked-for on the smoking Plain of Vigrid, Vidar seizes the Fenris-wolf and slays him after the manner of Samson slaying the lion, by wrenching his jaws asunder.

Having thus avenged Odin's death, Vidar instantly begins, amid a world in embers, to evoke from the red ruins, by a touch of creative magic, the green harbingers of a new and fairer planet, more fit than the present earth to be the domain of gods and men.

§ 61. THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE UNIVERSE.

And what of the promised beautiful world which is to take the place of the present earth?

In the Eddas, this cosmic scheme is left for the most part to the imagination; the details which the skalds venture to give are scant and vague; but this lack of definiteness is to be expected; for as the aged prophetess Hyndla quaintly says, 'Few mortals can foresee further than to the time when Odin shall meet the wolf.'

The following are some of the prophetic particulars:—

1. Odin is to have no future life, and therefore can have no share in the government of the future world. There being no Odin (or sun-god) the question arises, 'Will there be no sun in the new

heavens?' The answer is, 'There will be a new sun, far brighter than the old.' And the explanation is etymological. The solar orb, in the Germanic languages, is not masculine but feminine. Fulfilling the laws of her sex, the sun—as a female—is to bring forth (before Doomsday) a feminine successor, a new solar globe, the second to exceed the first in glory; reminding us of Horace's description of 'the beautiful mother of a more beautiful daughter.' And the 'Voluspa' quaintly adds, 'The daughter shall go in her mother's ways.'

2. Balder and Höder will reappear in the new universe, and will confer upon it the salutary vicissitude of summer and winter, but without a cruel contrast of heat and cold.

3. Though Thor the Thunderer will have perished for ever, yet Thor's hammer, which is imperishable, is to be beneficially wielded by his two sons, Modi and Magni (or courage and strength).

4. Vidar (or the evergreen woods) will have the co-operation of Vali (or the annual regermination of plants). These two beneficent gods will jointly remake the framework of Nature, and will reclothe it with a verdure the like of which has never been seen by mortal eyes, or at least, not since Adam saw it in Eden.

5. Hœnir, one of the three original authors of the present globe—and who (it will be remembered) was sent down from Asgard to dwell as a hostage among the vans—will in the new universe not only resume his old godhead, but will fulfil the divine office of a chief priest.

6. Labour, toil, wholesome industry, all this is once more to be misdeemed a 'curse.' The wholesome sweat of the brow is not to be known, for there is to be no hard work. The implements of husbandry are not to exist, for by a sad blunder in the new cosmic economy, the soil of our reconstructed planet is to yield its harvest without the salutary necessity of being sown.

7. In order to people the new universe with an improved human race, the skalds assume that a certain man and woman, Lif and Lífraiser by name—a solitary pair—the sole survivors of the old humanity, will escape destruction at Ragnârok, and will re-enact the rôle of Ask and Embla; in other words, of Adam and Eve.

8. St. John, in describing the New Jerusalem, says, 'There shall be no more sea;' but not thus waterless is to be the new universe as foreseen by the Vikings, for therein, according to the Eddas, Niord (the Norse Neptune) and all his vans and water-sprites are once agen to flourish in a watery element: and the skalds even say, 'The fish-hawk shall capture fish.' These marine features of the heavenly paradise are congenial to the Norse fancy; for the Norsemen could have no perfect ideal of happiness without boat-sailing or fish-catching.

9. The gods, such of them as are to survive, will hold councils as of old. They will often talk of the closed career of Odin their dead Val-father. Moreover, in order to equip their divine minds

with the new knowledge needed in their new paradise, they will find golden tablets lying in the grass, containing runic records of the past and the future.

10. The three Norns (Urd, Verdandi, and Skuld) are heard of no more—

‘For the fates themselves are fated’—

and it is their fate to have no place, and to fulfil no function, after Ragnârok.

11. The One Supreme God, the God of Gimli, the God whose attributes seem to identify Him with the Jehovah of the Holy Scriptures, shall visibly establish an eternal throne in a colossal and luminous palace, which for splendour is described as ‘above the brightness of the sun.’

12. And what of Loki? Will *he* too reappear, or will his death at Ragnârok be followed by no resuscitation of his spirit? In other words, after he dies in his second duel with Heimdal, will Loki remain (like Odin and Thor) dead for ever? Will there be in the ultimate future no ‘spirit of evil’?

This is a point on which our venerated ‘grandmother,’ the elder Edda, does not speculate; but we may logically suppose that the new and improved universe, since it is to be largely patterned upon the present, will not long bar out the inevitable Loki; and why?

The credible answer is, that Divine Beneficence, so far as mortals have the means of prying into it, or the wit for comprehending it, seems to have hitherto governed the moral universe by always partially restraining, yet never by wholly annihilating, the principle of evil.

In other words (reverently be it spoken), the Author of all Good seems to have established His eternal code of justice on the mysterious theory that

‘Good is not good if single :
So good and evil intermingle.’

§ 62. LORD MACAULAY ON PRIMITIVE NATIONAL POETRY.

In some comprehensive and eloquent remarks on the early ballad poetry of the different nations of Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America, Lord Macaulay, in his well-known Preface to the *Lays of Ancient Rome*, says—

‘All human beings, not utterly savage, long for some information about past times, and are delighted by narratives which present pictures to the mind. . . . Such is the origin of ballad poetry. . . . Tacitus informs us that songs were the only memorials of the past which the ancient Germans possessed. We learn from Lucan and from Ammianus Marcellinus that the brave actions of the ancient Gauls were commemorated in the verses of the bards. During many ages, and through many revolutions, minstrelsy retained its influence over both the Teutonic and the Celtic race.

The vengeance enacted by the spouse of Attila for the murder of Siegfried was celebrated in rhymes of which Germany is still justly proud. The exploits of Athelstane were commemorated by the Anglo-Saxons, and those of Canute by the Danes, in rude poems of which a few fragments have come down to us. The chants of the Welsh harpers preserved, through ages of darkness, a faint and doubtful memory of Arthur. In the Highlands of Scotland may still be gleaned some relics of the old songs of Cuthullin and Fingal. The long struggle of the Servians against the Ottoman power was recorded in lays full of martial spirit. We learn from Herrera that, when a Peruvian Inca died, men of skill were appointed to celebrate him in verses, which all the people learned by heart, and sang in public on days of festival. The feats of Kurroglou, the great freebooter of Turkistan, recounted in ballads composed by himself, are known in every village of Northern Persia. Captain Beechey heard the bards of the Sandwich Islands recite the heroic achievements of Tamehameha, the most illustrious of their kings. Mungo Park found in the heart of Africa a class of singing men, the only annalists of their rude tribes, and heard them tell the story of the victory which Damel, the negro prince of the Jaloffs, won over Abulkader, the Mussalman tyrant of Foota Torra. This species of poetry attained a high degree of excellence among the Castilians, before they began to copy Tuscan patterns. It attained a still greater degree of excellence among the English and the Lowland Scotch during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. But it reached its full perfection in Ancient Greece; for there can be no doubt that the great Homeric poems are generically ballads, though widely distinguished from other ballads, and indeed from almost all other human compositions, for transcendent merit.

The foregoing copious passage, which seems to cover the whole field of the world's ballad-literature, is remarkable for a single omission: it omits to specify the Icelandic or Norse myths, those very myths which this Appendix has undertaken to set forth.

But if Lord Macaulay, who died in 1859, had lived a few years longer, long enough to have followed (as he would delightedly have done) the progress of recent scholarship as applied to the Eddaic literature, he would have set his Roman Preface ablaze with eloquent eulogy of the ballad-myths of the Far North, as they are seen in their primitive Auroral shimmer, rather than in their subsequent pallid Swabian reflection.

§ 63. THE GENERAL MORAL OF THE NORSE MYTHS.

As a whole, the Norse mythology is a drama of such thwarted purposes, such numerous fatalities, and such inevitable defeats, as to bring to mind Horatio's comments on Hamlet's troubled life and tragic death.

The stage-editions of Shakespeare's masterpiece always omit Horatio's concluding remarks; and so no audience at a modern theatre ever gets a chance of hearing Horatio's pithy summing-up of the chief points of the play.

But the great bard took uncommon pains to put into the mouth of Hamlet's chief friend, just before the fall of the curtain, a few last lines giving the moral of the piece. These lines are the simple key of explanation to the whole complicated drama. After the King, Laertes, and Hamlet—all three—have fallen, Horatio says—

‘Give order that these bodies,
High on a stage, be placéd to the view;
And let me speak to th’ yet unknowing world
How these things came about: so shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts;
Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters;
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause;
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook,
Fallen on the inventors’ heads.’

(*Hamlet*, Act v. sc. 2.)

The above quotation conveys not only Horatio's, but Shakespeare's own interpretation of the design and meaning of the play of Hamlet.

Now as the ‘melancholy Dane’ was himself a Norseman, so the play which bears his name offers to us, in Horatio's epitome of the tragedy, an apt *résumé* of the Norse mythology: for this mythology is itself a drama full of ‘accidental judgements,’ ‘casual slaughters,’ ‘deaths by cunning and forced cause,’ ‘carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,’ and ‘purposes mistook, fallen on the inventors’ heads.’

How unlike all this is to the gay, airy, and inconclusive Greek pageantry, which is supposed to be kept up for ever on the top of Mount Olympus! The Greek mythology is a drama which had a beginning, but can have no end. It is a *divina comedia* that must go on enacting itself interminably, or (as the monks say) *saecula saeculorum*; and which, as it can never converge to a conclusion, can therefore never culminate in a climax.

This is a criticism which cannot be gainsaid; and hence this Appendix is justified in affirming that the Greek mythology is a pleasing optimism, portrayed in a never-ending series of graceful tableaux and brilliant episodes, each one separately ‘a thing of beauty,’ and therefore ‘a joy for ever’; but, all taken together, lacking the final and crowning merit of a drama—which is, a *dénouement*.

On the other hand, the myths of our Gothic ancestors constitute, as a whole, a real drama; a drama not only with a beginning and an end, but with a logical forecast of the end from the beginning; a drama not pre-supposing, as its theatric stage, an eternal mountain-top, nor, as its materials, a limitless succession of in-

cidents; but a drama which, like life itself, is short; a drama which speeds from wrong-doing to swift punishment; a drama which admits of so little dilatoriness in its development that even its very episodes are but interjected foretokens of its final catastrophe.

Let the admission, therefore, be once more made—and made freely—that the Norse mythology has many crude and uncouth fables, lacking in Olympian taste and elegance; but, on the other hand, let our Gothic forefathers be credited with giving to their mythic system what the Greeks failed to give to their own, namely, a logical continuity of interest, a consecutive array of causes and consequences resulting in an inevitable crisis—a crisis which, from a literary point of view, is all the more dramatic because its ethical purpose is punitive and terrible.

In brief, the one great object of this mythic Norse drama is to castigate its offending *dramatis personae*, whether divine, human, or monstrous; inflicting upon them, all and each (on account either of their weakness, or else of their folly, or else of their wickedness), a swift, headlong, and universal downfall, set forth in the Eddas as the awful lesson of a tragedy that ends in

‘—the war of elements,

The wrecks of matter and the crush of worlds.’

Nevertheless, though this crisis includes the ruin of the earth, of the sun, of the moon, and of the stars (leaving, indeed, but few of the constituent elements of Nature *unruined*), yet, as a consoling afterthought, this terrible *finale* is not quite a finality; for it is followed by a tranquil and cheering epilogue, predicting a new and beatific world, wherein no war nor death shall be known—nor shall a harvest fail—nor a tear fall: a world wherein evil shall act but faintly, and only as a foil to set off truth and righteousness (somewhat as the shadow is needed to emphasize the sunshine): a world wherein the One Supreme God, greater than all the half-gods together, shall resume His long-interrupted sway—while round about Him, in His palace of Gimli, which out-glitters Valhal and which resembles the Apocalyptic Jerusalem, shall dwell a regenerated race of human souls, not merely in a city of gold and pearls, but in a kingdom wherein there shall be no injustice, no suffering, no decay, and no death.

§ 64. A FINAL WORD.

I make no apology for the repetitiousness of this synopsis; for I have had to mention many things several times over, in different forms of statement, and from opposite points of view. In especial, I have been obliged to ring pleonastic changes on Ygdrasil, on Valhal, on Ragnârok, on the foredoomed mortality of Odin and his fellow-gods, and on other constantly-recurring topics whereof this fascinating mythology keeps up a persistent re-utterance and re-illustration.

The individual skalds (few or many) who were the authors

of the ancient Eddaic poems are now unknown ; but though the names of these primal bards have not survived ; and though their ballads and songs, in many instances, have come down to modern days as mere fragmentary remains of a remote antiquity ; still, notwithstanding this half-ruined (and half-forgotten) literature, a clear outline of the general system of the Old Norse or Scandinavian mythology is almost as correctly deducible from the two Icelandic Eddas as if an abridgement of the Greek mythology were drawn directly and exclusively from the two Homeric epics.

But no crowded series of mythic personations, such as I have here epitomized as 'THE GODS OF THE VIKINGS,' can be satisfactorily crammed into a mere Appendix ; and I am quite aware that, even with my intentional re-statements, I have still not been able to give all the entangled and many-sided complications which I find interwoven in the intricate web and woof of the Old Norse myths.

But, in spite of my 'vain repetitions,' I will not close my unpretentious sketch without venturing to add to it one more and final reiteration ; which is, that for a quarter of a century I have had a high and ever-growing sense of the poetic value of these grand old fables of the Far North.

They are fancies which, in their large and noble majesty, could have sprung only from a proud and free-spirited race—a race whose original stirp may be called unique and unequalled in the history of tribal genealogies—for our far-off Norse ancestors were the most Arian of the Arians, the most Gothic of the Goths !

It is not too much to say of our pagan forefathers in Scandinavia, that in bone, in blood, and in brain, with their blue eyes, with their light hair, and with their clean thoughts, these earliest and typical Norsemen were physically, mentally, and morally superior to any correspondingly primitive people in any other climate or country of the European world.

Look at the frost-bitten Icelanders of the early years of the colonization—exiles from Norway for Liberty's sake—showing amid storm and hunger the necessary nerve and grit and conscience to plant and nourish in an Arctic island, during the darkest of the dark ages, a thrifty Republic which lasted for four hundred years !

What though, in the vicissitudes of politics, this old Republic has had its day—like the Republic of Venice, or like the Republic of Greece ? Yet the old Republican spirit of the early Norwegians who colonized Iceland (that is to say, the irrepressible spirit of civic freedom, of self-government, and of human brotherhood) has neither died out nor languished, but is as rife at present in the region of the Midnight Sun as it was a thousand years ago ; and it may at any moment rekindle all Norseland into a blaze of patriotic fire !

Meanwhile in the present age the one most subtle and penetrating of all the elements of national progress consists, not in any

spasmodic political upheaval, but in a steady popular education: for there is no modern conqueror like the alphabet; there is no modern civilizer like the school-book!

Shall the remote Arctic Circle (like the rest of Europe) be judged, as to its civilization, by this severest of all modern tests?

Yea, verily!

I am therefore happy to say (on the evidence of the most recent Icelandic Census) that, at this moment, not a ten-year-old boy or girl in all Iceland can be found who is unable to read and write.

Such children are the worthy descendants of those early patriots who first recorded the Eddaic ballads and lays!

Hence I say, all honour to the Northernmost of the Northmen, who, in the past, hated tyranny as few ancient nations hated it, and who, in the present, love liberty with a passion such as few modern nations feel for it!

I may, therefore, fitly dismiss my congenial theme by borrowing a couple of striking phrases from the pen of Professor York Powell of Oxford, who, in comparing the Iceland of the ninth with the Iceland of the nineteenth century, says that just as *then* (when the Arctic commonwealth was young) '*the poorest franklin was the social equal of the proudest chief*'; so also *now* (in that same Northern home of liberty, morality, and education) '*there is social equality in a sense which exists in no other European community.*'

PARIS, October, 1896.

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MAR 17 1922

OXFORD: HORACE HART
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY